Modern Irish

A Comprehensive Grammar

Nancy Stenson

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Modern Irish: A Comprehensive Grammar is a complete reference guide to modern Irish grammar, providing a thorough overview of the language.

Key features include:

- highly systematic coverage of all levels of structure: sound system, word formation, sentence construction and connection of sentences
- authentic examples and English translations which provide an accessible insight into the mechanics of the language
- an extensive index, numbered sections, cross-references and summary charts which provide readers with easy access to the information

Modern Irish: A Comprehensive Grammar is an essential reference source for the learner and user of Irish. It is ideal for use in schools, colleges, universities, and adult classes of all types.

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Nancy Stenson

To my students and my teachers

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Acknowledgements

Some chapters of the grammar that follows borrow from my previous books, *Basic Irish* and *Intermediate Irish*, published by Routledge in 2008. The material used includes primarily introductory wording for several chapters, some examples, and certain tables and figures that originally appeared in those books.

Examples provided are primarily drawn from my fieldwork over many years in several Gaeltacht communities, especially in Counties Meath and Galway, and occasionally from television or radio broadcasts, and traditional folk literature. These include a few sources included in the

main references, as well as other grammars and dictionaries, novels, histories and short stories, which are listed separately as data sources at the end of the reference section.

Irish Gaelic, or Irish, as it is known in Ireland, is one of the six Insular Celtic languages that have survived to modern times. The modern Celtic languages fall into two branches; Irish is a member of the Goidelic (or Gaelic) branch, which also includes Scottish Gaelic and Manx Gaelic, the latter currently enjoying a revival after the death of the last native speaker in the 1970s. The three Goidelic languages are all forms of Gaelic (which had a common written history until the sixteenth century), but they are generally referred to as Irish, (Scottish) Gaelic, and Manx, respectively. The Brythonic (or Brittanic, or British) branch of the family consists of Welsh, Breton, and Cornish (also undergoing a revival since the death of the last monolingual in the eighteenth century). All these languages are in a precarious position, with shrinking numbers of native speakers in the communities that have survived to the current century, extreme pressure from the majority language of the region (French in the case of Breton, English in the others) and variable, often limited, support from national authorities. Of all of them, Irish appears on the surface to be in the strongest position for several reasons. Since the 1920s, it has enjoyed official status within the Irish State. It is designated in the Constitution of Ireland as the first official language (English being the second) and is a required subject of study in all primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland. A passing grade on the national school-leaving exams is required for matriculation at campuses of the National University of Ireland, and knowledge of Irish is an important skill for employment in parts of the Civil Service and in teaching. Censuses continue to show growth in the number of respondents claiming ability to speak Irish, although not all these speakers necessarily use the language on a regular basis. Irish is also, uniquely among Celtic languages, a working language of the European Union.

Below the surface, however, the status of the language is less stable than these advantages might lead one to expect. Most native Irish speakers still live in rural communities, mostly in the west and south of Ireland, known as *Gaeltachtaí*, although increasing numbers also

live in towns and cities throughout Ireland, as well as abroad.

The term *Gaeltacht* refers to a region where Irish is the language of the majority of residents and is still used as the community vernacular; in contrast, the *Galltacht* is the much larger part of Ireland that is predominately English-speaking; the Galltacht includes virtually all cities and towns of any size. Gaeltacht status is an official designation, which historically has brought certain privileges. Subsidies of various sorts are available to fluent Irish speakers in Gaeltacht communities, supporting education, housing, and industry in those communities. However, despite these official supports, and census records showing a growing number of speakers of Irish as a second language (L2) at varying levels of fluency, studies from the last two to three decades have raised a number of red flags regarding the status of the Gaeltacht. Not only have the boundaries of the Gaeltacht shrunk steadily throughout the last century, the number of native Irish speakers actively using the language and transmitting it to children continues to decline in these regions (Hindley 1990, Ó Giollagáin & Mac Donnacha 2008), and even among Gaeltacht children raised with Irish in the home recent studies have found declining Irish language skills and growing dominance in English (Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007, Péterváry et al. 2014). Moreover, official legislation in support of Irish does not always find sufficient financial backing to make the laws enforceable in meaningful ways. Thus, Irish finds itself in the unique position of being an endangered minority language (so designated by UNESCO), despite being the first official language of the Republic of Ireland.

At the same time, although by no means everyone who studies Irish in school develops even a basic functional competence in the language or ever uses it outside the classroom, the language has an enthusiastic base of support and use both within Ireland and in classes and study groups in the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia, among numerous other countries. Pupils attending these classes include not only second- and third-generation members of Irish immigrant families, but individuals with no Irish heritage at all, but who for various reasons have an interest in Ireland, its history, its culture and language.

Abbreviations

adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
CO	Caighdeán Oifigiúil, the Official Standard grammar
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
N	noun
NP	noun phrase
pl.	plural
sg.	singular
V	verb
VP	verb phrase
VSO	verb-subject-object, referring to basic word-order pattern
1	first person (speaker)
2	second person (listener)
3	third person (neither speaker nor listener)

Background

Before tackling the structures of Irish sentences, it may be useful to review some background on sound patterns of the language and their influence on its grammar, as well as some information on the variations found across Irish-speaking regions. The first chapter of this introductory section describes the dialects of Irish and where they are spoken. The next two provide an overview of Irish phonology and spelling, which may be helpful to learners with limited access to the spoken language, and to the initial consonant mutations that can appear in certain lexical and syntactic environments that will be discussed further in the grammar sections to follow. The last chapter of this section contains a glossary of basic grammatical terminology that will be assumed in what follows; other more specific terms will be introduced in the chapters covering the phenomena to which they pertain.

Chapter 1

Dialects of Irish

For a language spoken in such a small territory and by so few speakers, Irish displays an impressive variation in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. These differences constitute the dialect variation that will be mentioned throughout this grammar. In countries like England or France, similar variation is found (as in virtually all languages), but as English and French are spoken throughout their respective countries, one usage or pronunciation fades into the next and the boundaries of individual differences of speech are not the same for every vocabulary item or grammatical usage, so that the differences may not be immediately noticeable except at the geographic extremes. In Ireland, however, communities of native speakers have been isolated from each other for several centuries by intervening English-speaking populations. Before the advent of mass communication and widespread car ownership, these communities had little contact with one another and the language in each developed in its own way with minimal input from the others or from any kind of standardization. Thus the differences in the modern varieties, or dialects, can be quite noticeable, although with effort and good will they are mutually intelligible.

Three major dialect regions are generally distinguished, which are sometimes named for the provinces in which they are found: Ulster, Connacht, and Munster. The Gaeltacht regions are highlighted on the map below.

Figure 1.1 Gaeltacht regions of Ireland

County names, or even specific regions and villages, may also be used to pinpoint dialect areas more precisely. Donegal, the northernmost county of the republic in the historical province of Ulster, contains several Gaeltacht communities with a number of features of grammar and pronunciation that distinguish them from regions to the south, although they also differ from each other in more minor ways. This is the largest area geographically, but the numbers

of speakers in the communities are relatively small. In Connacht, the west-central province, County Galway has the largest Irish-speaking population; Galway Irish includes the western region of Connemara and the coastal stretch just west of Galway, known as Cois Fharraige, as well as the Aran Islands. In addition, County Mayo in northern Connacht contains Gaeltacht communities that manifest some similarities to the dialect of Connemara but other features closer to southern Donegal speech. The dialects of Munster, all spoken south of the Shannon estuary, are found in the counties of Kerry, Cork, and Waterford. The speech of these regions differs noticeably from county to county but all share features in common that differentiate them from the dialects north of the Shannon. It is common also to hear reference to Northern (Ulster or Donegal) Irish, Western (Connacht or Connemara/Galway and Mayo) Irish, and Southern (Munster) Irish, designations that gloss over a number of differing features that distinguish individual communities within each of these regions.

In addition to these historic Gaeltacht areas, two other communities of Irish speakers deserve mention. A growing and vibrant Irish-speaking community in Belfast (cf. Maguire 1991, Mac Póilín 1997, O'Reilly 1999) draws largely on the Irish of Donegal, where many have attended Gaeltacht language courses, but it is developing in some respects in its own direction. Pronunciation and to some extent grammar are influenced heavily by the local English, since the majority of Belfast Irish speakers are second-language (L2) speakers of Irish, or in recent generations were raised bilingually by parents who grew up English-speaking but made the choice in adulthood to use Irish as their home language. In addition, two small Gaeltacht communities in the Leinster county of Meath were created starting in the 1930s, after the indigenous Irish had died out there. These communities were established by moving families from Gaeltachtaí in the west of Ireland to the more fertile farmland of Meath over a period of several years beginning in 1935. In Ráth Chairn, all the original settlers were from Cois Fharraige and farther west in Connemara, and the Irish still spoken there today is essentially that of Co. Galway. In Baile Ghib, settlers came from various other Gaeltachtaí, and the use of Irish in the community today, perhaps because of the dialect differences, is considerably more limited and dialectally mixed.

Finally, mention must be made of the Official Standard, or Caighdeán Oifigiúil (CO). After the first decades of official promotion and teaching of Irish, now nearly 100 years ago, and with its increasing use in parts of the Civil Service and in schools, a need emerged to establish some uniformity of grammar and vocabulary for purposes of consistency in teaching and publication. To this end, the CO was

developed and published in the 1950s. The designers of the CO attempted to draw on all three major provincial dialects in creating their published grammar, although many speakers (from all regions) report the impression that the CO favors dialects other than their own. No attempt was made to promote a particular pronunciation over others, the assumption being that teachers would use, for example, the Caighdeán verb forms in teaching, but with their own regional accent and vocabulary. Thus, in general, the Caighdeán provides a predominately morphological and orthographic standard more than a phonological, syntactic or lexical one, with concentration on noun and verb paradigms and the environments triggering initial mutations. However, inevitably perhaps, the forms (including certain vocabulary choices) published in the CO tend to be taken by learners and many teachers as somehow 'more correct' than dialect forms not included in the publication, which has led to tensions regarding standards of usage between native speakers and L2 speakers of the language. Recent revisions to the CO have leaned toward allowing more dialect variation than previously, but it remains to be seen to what extent these more recent versions will be accepted in the teaching community, for example. This grammar attempts to avoid such judgments, proceeding from the standard linguistic presumption that the linguistic forms used consistently by native speakers of a given region are no more or less correct than those of other regions. The CO is taken to be a sometimes necessary and useful compromise among the dialects when consistency is desirable, as in education, publication and broadcasting, but is not meant to replace the regional spoken varieties.

Differences among the Gaeltacht regions may be phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical. Phonological and morphological variation is the strongest. In this grammar, morphology sections (and some others) will start with CO forms for convenience, but where possible (and not too complex) will also acknowledge variation with brief commentary on regional conventions. Only brief summaries can be given here, but further details can be found in the many excellent studies of specific Irish dialects conducted throughout the twentieth century, among them de Bhaldraithe (1953, 1966), de Búrca (1970), Lucas (1979), Mhac an Fhalaigh (1968), Ó Cuív (1975), Ó Curnáin (2007), Ó Sé (2000), Stockman (1974), and Wagner (1979), among others. Ó Siadhail (1989) and Ó Raghallaigh (2013) also discuss dialect variation. Wagner (1958–69) is an excellent, if somewhat cumbersome, source of raw data for all dialects that still had living speakers in the mid-twentieth century. Transcripts of recorded conversations in Connemara Irish are published in Wigger (2004).

Chapter 2

Sounds and spellings

In terms of Irish pronunciation, the consonants are more challenging to a learner than the vowels, although it may not seem so at first. Vowel pronunciations are fairly straightforward, except that they can vary considerably from region to region, so that the same words may sound quite different when pronounced by speakers from different counties. A number of print and online sources offer pronunciation guidelines for many different dialects, and the present work will not seek to duplicate those. Rather, the focus of this chapter will be on interpretation of the Irish spelling system for learners, who generally find its relationship to pronunciation to be frustratingly opaque. This will require some discussion of the sounds of Irish, but it will be kept minimal. Further details are provided in a number of studies, including Ó Siadhail (1989), Ó Dochartaigh (1987), Ó Raghallaigh (2013), the various dialect studies listed in the references from the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS) and Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ) among others, as well as several online sources such as www.abair.ie and www.foclóir.ie.

Alphabet and pronunciation

Irish is written with the same alphabet as English, but normally only the following letters are used:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u

Other letters appear occasionally in English loanwords, especially *j* and *v* (e.g., *jab*–'job'; *vóta*–'vote,' also sometimes spelled *bhóta)*. Notice that there is no letter *k*. The sound represented by *k* in English is always written in Irish with a *c*. Moreover, the Irish sounds spelled with *c* are always pronounced 'hard,' i.e., like *cat* rather than *city*.

Many language learners tend to start from the written forms and

equate spellings directly with sounds, often relying on what they know of English spellings and the sounds they represent. This can be counterproductive in the case of Irish, because the sound inventories of the two languages are quite different and, accordingly, the values of seemingly familiar letters of the alphabet can be subtly (or greatly) distinct from what those same letters represent in English, just as letters like *j* or sequences like *ch* can stand for very different sounds in English, Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, Swedish, or Malagasy, to name just a few examples.

Since spelling is a cultural artifact imposed on spoken forms by the society using the language, it is useful to understand the sound system independently from its representation in writing, in the way children acquire their home language. Then the values of the letters used to represent sounds visually will make greater sense.

Accordingly, we will start with a brief overview of the most significant features of the Irish sound system, emphasizing the ways it differs from that of English. Once the distinctive sound patterns have been introduced, spelling rules will be presented. In referring to spellings, the letters representing particular spellings will be presented in italic font; references to sounds will use the conventional symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), enclosed in brackets [ ] or / /. Thus, *a* refers to the letter, regardless of how it is pronounced, which can vary in each language (consider the different pronunciations of the letter *a* in English *cat*, *father*, and *late*). The symbol [a] or /a/ (depending on the context of the discussion) represents the IPA value of a low central vowel (closest in English to that of *father*).

In general, the brackets [ ] mark specific sounds as they are identified by the IPA, whereas the slashed brackets / / indicate the *phonemes* of a particular language: that is, the contrastive segments that can distinguish meaning in that language, like /p/ and /b/ in English, where the difference in pronunciation of the initial consonants is the only thing differentiating meaning in words like *pat* and *bat*. Phonemes are language-specific; the sounds [p] and [b], although distinct in English, do not meaningfully contrast in Japanese or Finnish, for instance. Conversely, many languages, including Irish, rely on phonemic contrasts that do not exist in English and are therefore difficult for an English-speaker to recognize at first. A phoneme may differ in phonetic detail in a language, depending on its position in a word and the surrounding sounds, but these differences usually go unnoticed by speakers of the language, who consider them to be the same sound. For example, the English /p/ is slightly different acoustically in *pay* and *spray* but, as a rule, English speakers don't

notice the difference and consider both to be examples of the same consonant (whereas to a Chinese or Thai speaker, the two pronunciations are as meaningfully distinct as are /p/ and /b/ in English).

Consonants

There are many more consonant phonemes in Irish than in English, and some of the differences can be hard for English speakers to hear at first, but with practice and exposure to the spoken language, subtleties that are not significant in English can be distinguished in Irish contexts.

To begin with, no Irish sound matches the English phonemes usually represented by the letters *z, j,* or the sequence *ch* (e.g., the first sounds in *zebra, jasmine,* and *choice*). The spelling sequence *ch* is used in Irish, but pronounced quite differently, whereas the letters *z, j* occur only in words borrowed from English.

On the other hand, the Irish sound inventory includes distinctions that do not exist in English. Two of these are produced by placing the tongue in exactly the same position as for the sounds written *c* and *g* (phonetically [k] and [g]), but without letting the back of the tongue completely touch the top of the mouth. Thus, instead of closing off the air flow briefly, as is done in pronouncing [k] and [g], air is allowed to pass through a very constricted space in the same part of the mouth where [k] and [g] are formed, creating friction as it passes. The sounds that result are written *ch* and *gh* (sometimes *dh*) in Irish, reflecting their similarity to *c* and *g.* Phonetically, they are transcribed [x] and [ɣ].

2.2.1 Slender and broad

For the most part, consonant letters have about the same values as in English, with one major twist: in Irish, each consonant *letter* (including spelling sequences like *ch, gh*) apart from *h* represents two distinct *sounds*, known in Irish educational tradition as *slender* and *broad*. The technical linguistic terms for these sounds are *palatalized* and *velarized*, respectively. Roughly speaking, in addition to the regular positions of the tongue and mouth for each consonant, the middle of the tongue moves slightly toward the roof of the mouth (without actually touching) for slender (palatalized) consonants, while broad consonants involve raising the very back of the tongue slightly, and rounding or

at least relaxing the lips. Broad and slender consonants are distinguished in writing by the adjacent vowels, according to the spelling rule to be discussed further below: *slender with slender, broad with broad*. Briefly, slender consonants are always found adjacent to the so-called slender vowels *e* or *i in writing*; broad consonants are preceded and followed by *a, o,* or *u*. Consonant sequences are generally either all slender or all broad, except in occasional compounds. In the examples below, the slender consonants are underlined. The contrasting broad consonants are boldface without underlining; vowels are pronounced alike in both words except for some length differences. Extra vowels in one of each word pair indicate the quality of the adjacent consonants.

Table 2.1 Consonant quality

	Slender	Broad
b	bí	buí
c	ciúin	cúl
	craic	bac
d	daide	tada
	báid	bád
f	fiche	faoi
g	giall	gaol
	aige	ag a
l	léine	lae
	aill	ál
m	mín	maoin
	ainm	anam
n	ní	naoi
	ciúine	gúna
p	peann	pá
r	caoirigh	caora
	móir	mór
s	sí	suí
t	tiubh	tú
	ait	at

We may note here that neither the broad nor the slender *r* is pronounced as in English. An Irish broad *r* is much like the sound written as *r* in Spanish and many other languages, a very quick tap on the ridge behind the teeth (the *alveolar ridge*). The American English pronunciation of *t* and *d* between vowels (e.g., in *writer, Adam*) is very similar to this pronunciation of *r*. The slender *r* also involves contact between the tongue and the alveolar ridge, but with a quick pullback of the tongue that produces a slight buzz, somewhat like the French sound spelled as *j*, or the *s* in English *treasure*, but with a lighter touch. All instances of *r* are pronounced broad at the beginning of a word, after *s* and before *t, d, n,* or *l*, regardless of the adjacent vowel.

Regarding transcription of broad and slender consonants, because the phonetic details differ across dialects and contexts, Irish transcription

practice often uses a simplified system, which marks the slender consonant with a tick: /b'/; broad consonants are left unmarked, e.g., /b/. Where it is necessary to distinguish broad from slender phonemes in what follows, this system will be used. However, where a phenomenon under discussion (e.g., initial mutation) applies equally to broad and slender consonants, the unmarked transcription will be used as a cover form for both.

2.2.2 Tense and lax

The letters *l* and *n*, in addition to representing distinctive broad and slender sounds, also may hide another distinction, a difference in the tenseness with which the mouth muscles are held as the sound is produced and the length of time for which the sound is held. The distinction is reflected in spelling in the middle and at the end of words, by writing the tenser consonants double, but the spelling does not make a distinction word-initially (and it is being lost among many younger speakers). Other phonetic distinctions also play a role in the pronunciation of these consonants, but there is much variation across regional dialects and age groups, which cannot receive a thorough treatment here. As a general rule of thumb, however, when the sequences *ll* and *nn* are slender, they sound as if a *y* or *i* followed them in English spelling, as in words like *canyon, onion* or *billiards*. When broad, they are held longer than single consonants.

> ll: áilleacht, allas
> nn: bainne, banna

These contrast (at least in theory) with the single-consonant spellings in *aile, ala, báine, ban-ab*, although the full four-way contrast is in fact more limited from region to region. The pronunciation distinction between single and double spellings is completely absent in the Irish of Munster and is found only in slender varieties in Connacht, but remains more robustly in parts of Ulster, although it is gradually being lost there, too. The interested reader can find additional details in Ó Siadhail (1989) or Ó Raghallaigh (2013), or by listening to recorded examples of the contrast in different dialects from the sources mentioned above and in the references.

Vowels

Irish makes a distinction between long and short vowels. The former

are held slightly longer, with tenser mouth muscles. Vowels appearing alone (and stressed, if short) are pronounced in Connemara Irish as in the following examples, which should be taken only as approximations.

Table 2.2 Values of vowels

Irish vowel	Examples	Sounds like
Short		English vowel
a	sagart, fada	in father
e	deis, te,	in bed
i	minic, mhic	in fish
o	doras, solas	in cover
u	cur, mura	in put
Long		
á	tá, bád	in law
é	mé, céad	in gate
í	míle, sílim	in feed
ó	bó, póg	in boat
ú	súl, tú	in pool

That is, each of the five vowel letters represents two distinctive sounds, or phonemes, of Irish, namely a short vowel and a long vowel. The short vowels are always unmarked; the long vowels are usually marked, as above, with an acute accent, called *síneadh fada* or simply *fada.* The difference between long and short vowels is meaningful; that is, the length difference may be the only aspect of pronunciation distinguishing the meanings of two words, as in *solas*–'light' (short vowels) and *sólás*–'comfort, solace' (long vowels). The phonetic details of pronunciation, especially for a short vowel, may vary according to the vowel's position in a word, or the surrounding consonants, but native speakers interpret these as being versions of the same sound. Occasionally, long vowels are not marked with a fada, but these instances are usually predictable from other aspects of spelling and pronunciation in the word, the most important of which will be discussed later in this chapter.

For the most part the pronunciation of Irish vowels is close to that of the IPA values of each letter. Irish pronunciations of vowel letters are quite unlike their English counterparts, but are relatively similar to those found in many European languages like Spanish, Finnish, Welsh, or Italian. The values of each letter in pronunciation are also more consistent than in English, although not perfectly so. The quality of long and short vowels written with the same letter may vary somewhat in some dialects, but far less than the variation between, say, the so-called long and short *a* of English *mat* and *mate.* In Irish, length can be interpreted more literally; the long vowels simply take more time to produce than their short equivalents. The muscles of the mouth are also held more tensely for the long vowels, which

contributes to those differences of quality that can be discerned.

A result of the closer relationship between the vowel spellings and the IPA is that in most Irish dialects just five distinctive long-vowel and five short-vowel phonemes can be identified, although analyses vary. Some Donegal dialects, for example, have been analyzed as having six short-vowel phonemes (see Ó Raghallaigh 2013 for such an analysis of Gaoth Dobhair Irish), and Ó Siadhail (1989) offers an abstract analysis that reduces the phoneme inventory to three short vowels in Connemara.

Because the details of vowel pronunciation vary considerably across the Irish-speaking regions, but are readily recognizable as differences of accent, they are best learned by listening to sample pronunciations from the dialect of interest to the reader. Detailed written accounts can also be found in sources like Ó Raghallaigh (2013) or Ó Siadhail (1989).

2.3.1 Diphthongs

Diphthongs are sequences of vowels that operate like single sounds within the phonological system of a language. Common diphthongs of English are those written as *ow* and *oy*. In pronouncing words like *how* or *boy*, one can feel the tongue and lip position move as the vowel is pronounced. The Irish sound system includes several diphthongs. Some of these are reflected directly by the use of two vowels in their spellings, as in *ua* and *ia*. These may be followed by a silent *i* if the next consonant is slender:

  bia, ciall, bliain
  nua, tuath, nuair

Other diphthongs have less transparent spellings. Some of these developed historically from earlier sequences of vowels and consonants, and others have been borrowed from English and adapted their spellings to the Irish system. The diphthong /ai/ (as in English *eye*) may be written *agh, aigh, adh,* or *aidh.*

  adharc, aidhm, aghaidh, staighre

Another diphthong, /au/ (as in *cow*), is usually written by combining *a* with written *bh* or *mh* (pronounced/w/): *abhainn, samhradh,* but other spelling combinations can also be found, e.g., *rogha.*

2.3.2 Stress

In most cases, the stressed (accented) syllable in a word is the first one, as shown by the underlined syllable in the following examples.

aifreann
hata
duine
eilifint

A few exceptions are found in all dialects. In addition to isolated words like *arán* 'bread', usually pronounced *arán*, these exceptions include a set of time and place adverbs beginning with unstressed *a* (sometimes *i*), e.g.:

anseo 'here'
anois 'now'
amárach 'tomorrow'
inniu 'today'

and most others with related meanings. Two very common words with exceptional stress are *atá* 'which is', pronounced *atá*, and **amháin** 'one.'

In the dialects of Munster, the accent is on the second (sometimes even third) syllable in words where that syllable but not those preceding contains a long vowel or ends in *ach*, although it remains on the first syllable of the same words in Connacht and Ulster.

cailín 'girl' (elsewhere pronounced **cailín**)
amadán 'fool' (elsewhere, **amadán**)
salach 'dirty' (elsewhere **salach**)

Unaccented short vowels are generally reduced in pronounciation (as in English) to a sound that can be represented as 'uh,' known technically as *schwa*. Just as the bold vowels in the English words sof**a**, tel**e**phone, ver**i**fy, and oct**o**pus are all pronounced approximately alike despite different spellings, so are the following vowels in most Irish dialects: *pláta, tine, mo, ceimic*.

When one word ends in a short vowel and the next starts with one, only one vowel is usually pronounced. The vowel omitted is usually the unstressed one, most often the last vowel of the first word. If both are unstressed, then, since both are pronounced alike, it is impossible

to tell which is lost, but only one vowel is normally heard. Thus,

> **duine aisteach** is pronounced **duin' aisteach**
> **cóta Éibhlín** is pronounced **cót' Éibhlín**
> **duine atá** is pronounced **duine 'tá** (or **duin' atá**)

2.3.3 Long vowels before double consonants

The double-consonant sequences *nn*, *ll*, *rr*, and single *m*, when not followed by a vowel, cause the preceding vowel to be pronounced as long or as a diphthong in some dialects (especially Connacht and Munster), although they are not marked with a *fada*. The consonant sequence itself signals length. The same effect is also found with any of these letters written singly when followed by another consonant. Actual pronunciations vary regionally; the list below describes Connemara Irish, with some alternative pronunciations following.

> Like *á*: **clann**, **ard**, **mall**, **dall**, **ceann**, **carr**, **geall**, **am**
> Like *í*: **tinn**, **timpiste**, **muintir**, **im**, **cionn**, **dinnéar**
> Like *ú*: **lom**, **tonn**, **fonn**, **anonn**

Some words written with *o* in these contexts are pronounced instead as [au]. Examples include *donn*, *poll* (in Connacht and Munster), and *bord* in Connacht (pronounced like *ó* in Munster). Parts of Munster also pronounce *a* as [au] in words like *clann* and others on the list above; some Munster communities pronounce *i* as the diphthong [ai], in words like *tinn*, *dinnéar* etc. In Ulster Irish, sometimes the vowel is not lengthened at all, but the consonant may be still pronounced differently from those spelled singly.

Since consistency is not perfect across or even within dialects, listening to recorded speech is the best way to pick up specific pronunciations for a given region.

Deciphering spelling

Because only some vowels within Irish spellings are actually pronounced while others are there to signal consonant quality (slender or broad), many Irish words contain sequences of two or three vowels that may represent only one sound. Learning which vowels are pronounced and which simply mark consonant quality is one of the

major challenges of mastering Irish spelling. The following paragraphs provide some guidelines for interpreting spellings.

Vowels marked with the *síneadh fada* are always long. Any vowel +*fada* is pronounced, and vowels next to it can be assumed to mark neighboring consonants.

Pronounced like *á*:
    eá: **Seán**
    ái: **áit**
    eái: **Sheáin**
Pronounced like *é*:
    éa: **Séamas**
    éi: **céim**
Pronounced like *í*:
    uí: **suí**
    oí: **croí**
    aí: **scéalaí**
    uí: **buí**
    uío: **buíochas**
Pronounced like *ó*:
    ói: **bróige**
Pronounced like *ú*:
    úi: **cúis**
    iú: **siúl**
    iúi: **ciúin**

Certain unaccented spelling sequences also automatically represent long vowels. In addtion to the long-vowel or diphthong pronunciations noted above before *nn, ll, m, rr,* etc., the following may be noted.

•The sequence *ae(i)* is pronounced like *é*: *tae, Gaeilge, traein.*

• *Ao* and *aoi* are pronounced like *é* in Munster, like *í* elsewhere: *saor, naoi.*

•The sequence *eo(i)* is pronounced like *ó*: *leor, ceo, Eoin.*

Other vowel sequences are pronounced as single short vowels; the additional vowels simply identify an adjacent broad or slender consonant. For example, *ea, eai* (unless followed by the double consonants noted above), and *ai* at the beginning of a word are usually pronounced approximately like the *a* in English 'hat': *bean,*

fear, seaicéad, aisteach.

Likewise, *ei* is the spelling used for the sound /e/ before a slender consonant; the spelling *e* is found only at the end of a word. The long /e:/ similarly has a silent *i* inserted before a slender consonant and *a* before a broad one:

 *ceist, **eile**, **beir**; compare **te**, **mise** (same pronunciation of *e*)

In addition, the following rules apply.

 ai after a consonant is pronounced like *a*: *bainis, cailín*
 io is pronounced like *i*: *fios*
 oi is pronounced like *e(i)*: *toil, oiread*
   or sometimes like *o*: *scoil*
 ui is pronounced like *i*: *uisce, fuil*
 iu is pronounced like *u*: *fliuch*

2.4.1 Other patterns

A few other regular pronunciations are not reflected in spelling. When the letter *n* follows a consonant, it is often pronounced as /r/ in Connacht and Ulster. So northerners pronounce words like *cnoc, mná* as if written *croc, mrá.*

Another common pattern adds a vowel in pronunciation between sequences of *l, r, n,* and another consonant, although there is no vowel in the spelling. Words like *gorm, borb, dealbh, dealg, ainm* sound as if they had two syllables: something like *gorum, dealabh,* etc. One also can hear this pattern in some Irish pronunciations of the English word *film* as *filim.*

2.4.2 Exceptions

Some frequently used words are exceptions to the rules given above, e.g.:

 ea: **beag**'small'; more like English *beg* than *bag*
 eo: **seo**'this'; **eochair** 'key'; short, rather than long, *o*
 oi: **oileán**'island'; more like *i* than *e*

Each dialect has its own distinctive characteristics, so again it is essential to listen to the regional variety one is interested in learning to pick up precise pronunciation. The rules above are merely guidelines, to be refined as one progresses in the spoken language.

Chapter 3

Initial mutations

Initial mutations are a pervasive part of the grammar of Irish, so much so that they are likely to be found in even the simplest of sentences. This chapter describes the pronunciation and spelling changes associated with each mutation and the examples provided introduce a few of the contexts where these mutations are found. Other mutation triggers will be described in later chapters as the structures in which they appear are presented.

Lenition

Lenition, by far the most common mutation, is found throughout the language and is marked by writing an *h* after the affected consonant. At one time the pronunciation change was a straightforward weakening of the manner in which the original consonant is articulated, such that air passes through. This is still the case for some lenited consonants (e.g., *p, b, c, g*) but other pronunciation changes over the last couple of millennia have obscured the relationship between the original and lenited consonant in other instances, and the pronunciation of the spelling sequence must simply be learned on a case-by-case basis. The pronunciations of lenited consonants (broad or slender) are as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Lenition

Original consonant	Lenited consonant
b	*bh* = /v/ ([w] in some contexts and dialects)
c (/k/)	*ch* = /x/ (keep tongue in place but let air pass)
d	*d = dh* = /ɣ/ (same as lenited /g/)
f	*fh* = unpronounced, silent
g	*gh* = /ɣ/ (keep tongue in place but let air pass)
m	*mh* = /v/ (same as lenited /b/)
p	*ph* = /f/
s	*sh* = /h/ (when followed by *r, l, n,* or a vowel, but not before *p, t, c,* or *m*).
t	*th* = /h/

Lenition originally occurred whenever a consonant came between vowels. Therefore, lenition is often found in the middle of words (e.g., *abhainn*–'river'; *bóthar*–'road'). Because many modern words once contained vowels that have since disappeared, lenited consonants can also be found before consonants and even word-finally (e.g., *samhradh* 'summer'; *ach* 'but'). These pronunciations, however, never change in the modern language. Grammatical lenition, in contrast, produces alternations between a base pronunciation found in some contexts (and the form found in dictionaries), and a lenited one, when the same word appears in other contexts, as described below.

In some dialects of Irish, and especially among older speakers, lenited and unlenited pronunciations of /n/, /l/, and /r/ can be detected. In these cases, the tense consonants (transcribed by Irish grammarians with small capitals, /ɴ/, etc.) are found in non-lenition contexts and the non-tense forms (/n/, etc.) are the lenited pronunciations. These differences are not represented in spelling, and are increasingly dying out among all but the oldest generations. They will not be considered further here, although learners with access to native speakers of a particular dialect might wish to listen for such distinctions.

Eclipsis

Also called *nasalization* by some scholars, eclipsis replaces the voiced consonants written *b, d, g* by the nasal consonant pronounced with the mouth in the same position (/m/, /n/, /ŋ/, respectively). A voiceless consonant (*c, f, p, t*) becomes its voiced counterpart (changing the pronunciation to /g/, /v/, /b/, /d/, respectively). Eclipsis of /g/ is indicated in writing by *ng* for eclipsed /g/, which represents the same sound represented by that spelling at the end of English words like *sing* (/ŋ/). For other consonants, eclipsis is indicated by simply writing the letter for the new sound in front of the one for the original sound (which then becomes silent): *mb, nd, gc, bhf, bp, dt*. Note that eclipsis of *f* produces a consonant otherwise found only through lenition; thus, it is written *bh*, reflecting its historical origin, giving *bhf* for eclipsed *f*.

Eclipsis is more limited than lenition. It affects fewer consonants, and although it may have occurred within words historically (e.g., *éadrom* 'light' is a compound of the negative prefix *éa-* and the adjective *trom* 'heavy') modern spelling does not reflect this history, so we see eclipsis written only at the beginning of words, where the eclipsed form alternates with the simple consonant.

Summary of changes and contexts for mutations

The spelling effects of lenition and eclipsis for the consonants that they affect are summarized in the table below (a dash indicates that the mutation does not affect this consonant).

Table 3.2 Effects of lenition and eclipsis (in spelling)

Original consonant	Lenited	Eclipsed	Examples	
b	bh	mb	bád, bhád, mbád	'boat'
c	ch	gc	cat, chat, gcat	'cat'
d	dh	nd	dún, dhún, ndún	'close'
f	fh	bhf	fear, fhear, bhfear	'man'
g	gh	ng	gall, ghall, ngall	'foreigner'
m	mh	–	mall, mhall	'slow'
p	ph	bp	poll, pholl, bpoll	'hole'
s	sh	–	suigh, shuigh	'sit'
t	th	dt	teach, theach, dteach	'house'

Both types of mutation are found in a variety of environments, both lexical and grammatical. In some cases, specific lexical items automatically trigger a mutation on the first consonant of a following word, regardless of how it is used in the sentence. For example, lenition of the consonants in the above table is found after the possessive pronouns *mo* 'my,' *do* 'your,' and *a* 'his,' the numbers two to six, the negative particle *ní*, and the past/conditional form of the copula, *ba*. Additionally, specific words such as *uile, 'chuile* 'every,' *aon* 'any, one,' and a number of prepositions (e.g., *ar, de, do, ó, faoi*) are also followed by lenition.

> **mo chat**   'my cat'
> **'chuile dhuine**   'every person'
> **trí theach**   'three houses'
> **ó Chorcaigh**   'from Cork'
> **ní thuigim**   'I don't understand.' (cf. **tuigim**–'I understand')

Eclipsis is found on words following the numbers *seven* through *ten*, all plural pronominal possessors, the preposition *i(n)*, and the verbal particles *an, go,* and *nach,* to name just the most common examples.

> **ár gcat** 'our cat'
> **naoi dteach** 'nine houses'
> **i gCorcaigh** 'in Cork'
> **An dtuigeann tú?** 'Do you understand?'

Eclipsis may affect vowels as well. In cases where the trigger word ends with an *n* in spelling, the sound is simply pronounced as written:

An imríonn tú peil?'Do you play football?'

Likewise, the preposition *in* is so written before a vowel, although *n* is absent from spelling before an eclipsed consonant. Compare *i gCorcaigh* above to *in Éirinn* 'in Ireland.'

Where *n* is not part of the base form of the trigger word (as it is for *i(n)*, *an*), it is added (with a hyphen) before the affected word that follows.

naoi n-uaire'nine hours'
ár n-uncail'our uncle'

In subsequent chapters, when specific words mentioned cause a mutation on a following word, this will be noted. Dictionaries also indicate the mutations caused by particular lexical entries.

Grammatically conditioned mutations are more frequent and often more complex. Some involve a particular combination of words and grammatical environments, that together cause a given mutation (e.g., the definite article and a particular case form of a noun, or a verbal particle and a particular tense of the verb). These will be introduced throughout the grammar chapters along with structures requiring the mutations.

Other mutations

Other changes affect a more limited range of sounds, and in more limited contexts. The first two discussed here affect vowels rather than consonants.

3.4.1 Prefixation of h

An *h* may be inserted between vowels in some contexts, usually those where lenition of a consonant is *not* found. For example, the plural definite article *na* causes no mutation of a following initial consonant, but it does require an *h* to be inserted (in both spelling and pronunciation) before a vowel.

daoine   'people'
na daoine   'the people'
oifigí   'offices'
na hoifigí   'the offices'

Other instances of *h* insertion may be triggered in part by grammatical configurations; they will be presented in the relevant grammar sections.

3.4.2 Insertion of t

A /t/ may be inserted before the initial vowel of a masculine noun after the definite article *an* when the phrase is being used as a subject or direct object. The inserted *t* is separated from the rest of the word in spelling by a hyphen:

éan   'bird'
an t-éan   'the bird'

3.4.3 Change of s to t

In certain contexts, where other consonants are affected by lenition, an initial consonant /s/ instead changes to /t/, and is marked like eclipsis in spelling, by placing the *t* before the *s*.

sráid   'street'
an tsráid   'the street'

These contexts always involve the article *an* 'the,' which will be described in more detail in .

Terminology

The grammar discussion that follows attempts to minimize technical terminology, but some basic concepts are essential for clear and concise presentation. Some of the most basic grammatical terms will be introduced here, with more specific terminology provided in later chapters as needed.

Grammatical categories

Elements of a sentence vary in the way they are used, the kinds of information they convey relative to other elements in the sentence, and the grammatical markings that signal such roles and relations. It is useful to classify the words and phrases of a sentence according to the grammatical patterns they exhibit. These groupings are known as *grammatical categories*, or, in more traditional terms, parts of speech. The primary categories are described below, both in traditional terms (based mainly on meaning) and in terms of their grammatical behavior.

Nouns and verbs. These are the essential building blocks of any sentence. Most sentences contain at least one verb and often one or more nouns as well. Membership in these categories is to some extent language-specific; what counts as a verb in some languages may be expressed with nouns or adjectives in others. For the sake of familiarity, this introduction will draw primarily on English examples and patterns, with Irish examples presented in the grammar proper. Differences between the two languages are minimal as regards the classification of words into these categories, although there are some exceptions; those that exist will be pointed out as necessary in the appropriate sections of the grammar.

Verbs are the elements that express the primary event or situation that a sentence describes, whether a deliberate action (e.g., *kiss, build, eat*), a process (e.g., *think, grow*), or a state of existence (e.g., *be, suffer*). In

terms of grammatical behavior, in both Irish and English, verbs are the elements that carry information about *tense* and *aspect*. Tense represents the time reference of the event (e.g., in the past or future), while aspect indicates how the action is viewed by the speaker, e.g., as ongoing, habitual, over and done with, yet to happen, etc.). Verb forms sometimes include information about the participants in the event, although the degree to which participant information is conveyed by the verb is less consistent in Irish (and less still in English) than in some other languages like Spanish, German, Russian, etc., where every verb form contains such information.

Noun is the category of words that identify the participants in the event expressed by the verb. Nouns have been traditionally described as words that name a 'person, place, or thing.' Within a sentence, these words contain information, either in their form or in their position with respect to other words, about the nature of the individual's participation in the event, i.e., its *grammatical role* (see below). Structurally based accounts of English sometimes describe nouns as those words that can, under appropriate circumstances, be preceded by the word *the*: *the book, the water, the French*, even *the Peter that I know*).

Adjectives. These words describe the referent of a noun with which they are grammatically associated, helping to restrict the range of possible individuals to which a noun could refer to just those described by the property the adjective denotes. They occur after an article and before a noun in English (after the noun in Irish) and can also serve as predicates of *be*. Examples include *tired, rich, beautiful, indecent, frivolous, pleasant*, and *tasty*.

Adverbs. Sometimes said to modify verbs in the way adjectives modify nouns, this class is actually much more diverse and complex. The category of adverbs does include words describing the manner in which an action is performed (*fast, carefully, cheerfully*), but also words and phrases referring to time (*soon, yesterday, last year, now, in a while*) and place (*here, yonder, at home*), or speaker attitude (*frankly, seriously, unfortunately*), and can include the whole sentence in their domain. They may also further delimit other sentence elements, especially adjectives and other adverbs (*very, just, right*, as in *very beautiful, very carefully, just there, right now*).

Prepositions. Prepositions express a relationship between a noun associated with them and the verb or another noun in the sentence. The relationship may be physical (*in, on, above, under, behind*) or more abstract (*of, without, before, by means of*). As the last example

indicates, they may be complex, consisting of more than one word. When used as prepositions, such words are always followed by a phrase containing a noun or pronoun (*under the bed*, *with us*, *over the rainbow*, *behind George*, *up the hill*). Many may also be used alone, in which case they can be viewed as having adverbial functions, e.g., *go up*, *stay behind*).

A *phrase* is a group of words that functions as a syntactic unit. Examples of phrases include *under the circumstances*, *the quick brown fox*, *really very serious*, *ate a peach.* In most cases they can appear in the same contexts as single words, such as *therefore*, *Walter*, *important*, and *fell*, respectively.

Clauses are sentence-like phrases that contain a verb. Any full sentence is also a clause (*Walter ate a peach*), but clauses may also be subordinate to another verb and not constitute full sentences on their own (*that Walter ate a peach*, *for Walter to eat a peach*, *when Walter ate a peach*, *the peach that Walter ate*, etc.).

Grammatical roles

Words, and the corresponding phrases built around them, serve specific roles within a sentence; these roles specify the relationship of a given word or phrase to the rest of the sentence or parts of it. This relationship may be specified in the meaning of the word itself, as in the case of prepositions. In other cases it is identifiable from the word order or other grammatical aspects of a sentence. Nouns and noun phrases in particular may serve different roles in relation to the verbal element of a sentence, the most important of which are outlined in this section.

Subject. The essential noun phrase in any sentence, the subject refers to the person or other individual that performs or experiences the event expressed by the verb. In English, it typically comes before the verb: **Pat** *fell overboard*, **three hours** *elapsed*, **my son** *ate his dinner.*

(Direct) object. Not all verbs require or even allow an object, but for those that do, the object (or direct object) is the phrase in the sentence that typically follows the verb in English and represents the entity that is acted upon, or that in some other way completes the verbal event: *Ruth knocked* **Pat** *down, we spent* **three hours** *on the train, I fed* **my son***.*

Indirect object. Still fewer verbs require or allow an indirect object. Semantically, it is the recipient of something from another individual or the beneficiary of an action. In English (and Irish) it is usually marked by the prepositions *to* or *for* (in Irish, *do*): *Ruth apologized to*

Pat, *I gave an apple to **my son**, we did it for **you***. In English (but not Irish), the preposition may sometimes be omitted (especially with *give*), in which case the indirect object precedes the direct object: *I gave **my son** an apple*.

Oblique. All other relationships to the verb or other nouns that a noun can have (e.g., location, accompaniment, instrument, time, etc.) are known by the cover term *oblique*, and are usually expressed in English and Irish with a variety of prepositions: *We hid the papers **in the drawer***, *Pat went to the cinema **with Ruth***, *She fixed it **with duct tape***, *We worked **for three hours***, *I came home **before my son***. They are almost always optional, meaning that a sentence would be complete (although perhaps less detailed) without them.

Predicate. In a bipartite division of a sentence, two essential components are generally recognized: a subject and a predicate. The subject is typically the grammatical subject as described above, but in pragmatic terms, it can be identified as the entity that the sentence is about. The predicate, in contrast, is what is said about the subject in that sentence. Typically a predicate may be a verb phrase (including any direct and indirect objects and oblique phrases or adverbials it contains), or in the case of predicates that describe a state of being, a predicate may include complements of *be* that are adjectival (*is tired*), locative (*was in the kitchen*), or nominal (*is her sister*).

Other terms

Finite/non-finite. These terms describe forms that verbs (or clauses) take. Finite verbs are marked (often by suffixes or other morphological means) for tense, and sometimes also for the person of their subject. Non-finite verbs do not carry tense marking and include English *infinitives* (*to do*), *participles* (*doing, done*), and *gerunds* (*doing*), and Irish *verbal nouns* and *verbal adjectives* (see Chapters 13 and 14).

Subordinate clause. A subordinate clause does not form a sentence by itself, but is dependent in some way on other parts of the sentence. It may, like a *relative clause*, further qualify some element of the sentence, or it may be a *complement* to a verb or other category, necessary to complete the sentence, as in *I said **that I would help***. A verb like *say* requires mention of something specific that was said; it could be as simple as the pronoun *it*, but in the above example, the complement is the entire subordinate clause in bold.

Morphology. Morphology comprises the processes a language uses for

forming words. This may include rules for compound formation, as well as for adding prefixes and suffixes, not only to create new words but also to signal grammatical information, such as marking tense on verbs and case on nouns.

Person. This refers to the individuals involved in a discourse and may be marked morphologically, especially on verbal forms in many languages. *First person* refers to the speaker or a group including the speaker (*I, me, my, we, us, our*); *second person* is the individual or group the speaker is addressing (*you, your*); and *third person* is everyone else.

Sentence basics

The chapters in this first section outline the syntax of simple sentence formation, including word order patterns with both transitive and intransitive verbs. Later chapters of the section deal with the structures that express having and being, negation, questions, and an extremely widespread structure for marking words and phrases with contrastive emphasis.

Basic word order

Unlike in English, simple statements in Irish start with the verb, so the usual word order in sentences is *verb-subject-object* (VSO). The action or event described is mentioned first, and then the individuals involved. In contrast, English usually puts the verb in the middle.

As the last example shows, some events have only one participant (the subject); the verb still comes first in Irish. If there are three participants, the third (often an indirect object) is introduced by a preposition and follows the other two:

Pronoun objects

In sentences like the examples above, when the direct object is expressed by a pronoun, that pronoun usually comes last. This is not an absolutely required order, but it is extremely common, as long as any additional material between object position and the end of the sentence is fairly short. Subjects, including pronouns, always immediately follow the verb. Notice again the differences between Irish and English order.

Thug	Máire	do Ruairí	é.	'Máire gave it to Ruairí.'
gave	Máire	to Ruairí	it	
Labhair	sí	Gaeilge	liom.	'She spoke Irish with me.'
spoke	she	Irish	with-me	
Labhair	sí	liom	í.	'She spoke it with me.'
spoke	she	with-me	it	

Subject suffixes

Sometimes subject suffixes on the verb take the place of subject pronouns. In these cases there is no separate pronoun; an object or any other sentence element immediately follows the verb. If there is no object or other information expressed, the verb and its suffix alone may form a complete sentence. Verbal endings will be covered in detail in later chapters.

Feicim	**Bairbre.**	'I see Bairbre.'
see-I	Bairbre	
Imreoimid	**cártaí.**	'We will play cards.'
will-play-we	cards	
Thiteadar.		'They fell.'
fell-they		

Verb suffixes like these are used most frequently in the dialects of Munster, and least frequently in Ulster Irish. The Caighdeán Oifigiúil and Connacht Irish use about the same number of suffixed forms, but not always the same ones. See Chapter 11 for further details.

A sentence will often include additional information about time, place, or other people or things involved in the event. This information usually follows the verb and any subject or object nouns. Place usually precedes time.

Cheannaigh mé carr i nGaillimh. 'I bought a car in Galway.'
Thit mé inné.   'I fell yesterday.'
Cheannaigh mé carr i nGaillimh inné. 'I bought a car in Galway yesterday.'

Object pronouns still tend to come last, although the longer the intervening material, the more likely the pronoun is to remain in situ.

Feiceann Máirtín anois thú. 'Máirtín sees you now.'
Feicim ar an mbord é.   'I see it on the table.'
Cheannaigh mé inGaillimh inné é. 'I bought it in Galway yesterday.'
Cheannaigh mé é i nGaillimh inné.

Subordinate clauses

Sentences may contain more than one clause (i.e., more than one verb). The clauses may represent events that are equal in status, linked together with conjunctions such as **agus** 'and,' **nó** 'or,' and

ach–'but,' or may be subordinate to, that is, dependent on, another verb in the same sentence. There are many types of subordinate clause, which are discussed in greater detail in the Grammar IV section of this book. Just one type of subordinate clause is introduced here: the complement clause. Complement clauses like those below are introduced by a *complementizer* particle, most commonly *go* 'that,' and are often necessary to complete a predicate. For example, *sílim* 'I think' in the sentence below must be followed by something to form a complete sentence.

Sílim go labhraíonn Liam Gaeilge. 'I think (that) Liam speaks Irish.'

If the complement clause is in the past tense, the complementizer changes form to *gur*.

Sílim gur labhair sé Gaeilge. 'I think that he spoke Irish.'

The effects of *go/gur* on the following verb are addressed in the next chapter and in Chapter 9. Other complementizers will be introduced in later chapters along with the types of clause they introduce.

Complement clauses are often placed at the end of a sentence, after prepositional phrases or adverbials.

Dúirt sé liom go dtiocfadh sé. 'He told me he would come.'
Gheall sé dúinn inné go mbeadh sé anseo. 'He promised us yesterday that he would be here.'

Other orders

The vast majority of simple sentences follow the pattern described above. A few common exceptions include sentences involving the copula *is* (see Chapters 7 and 8 for further details), where the first noun in the sentence may be part of the predicate, in which case the subject (noun or pronoun) may come last.

Is múinteoir mé. 'I am a teacher.'
be teacher I

Various stylistic devices also allow for alternative orders. Certain

adverbs can appear at the beginning of a sentence before the verb, without otherwise affecting the form of the sentence. Adverbs of time and those that offer a commentary on the rest of the sentence are particularly subject to this positioning.

Inné, bhí mé i bPáras.   'Yesterday I was in Paris.'
Anois, an dtuigeann tú?   'Now do you understand?'
Ar an drochuair, níor thainig sé.   'Unfortunately, he didn't come.'

Adverbs have greater flexibility in general than most sentence components. All of the above could be in the final position in the sentence with equal ease.

A particularly long subject, such as one containing a relative clause (see Chapter 24), may precede the verb, identifying it as the topic of the rest of the sentence. A pronoun referring to it will usually appear in the normal subject position after the verb.

An cailín a chonaic tú inné ag teach an phobail, níl sí anseo anois.   'The girl you saw at church yesterday isn't here now.'

As objects, such long phrases may either precede the verb or be placed at the very end of the sentence.

An caliín a labhair tú léi inné ag teach an phobail, chonaic mé inniu ag an scoil í.   'The girl you spoke to at the church yesterday, I saw her today at the school.
Chonaic mé inniu ag an scoil í, an cailín a labhair tú léi inné ag teach an phobail.'I saw her today at the school, the girl you spoke to yesterday at the church.'

Such structures are common in proverbs.

An té nach bhfuil láidir, caithfidh sé a bheith glic.   'The person who is not strong must be cunning.'

Object nouns may appear initially for stylistic emphasis, with the remainder of the clause in its usual order. Such sentences are most often negative (see Chapter 6 for negative formation).

Deoir níor ól sé.   'Not a drop did he drink.'

Freagra ní bhfuair mé. 'No answer did I get.'
A leithéid de sheafóid ní chloisfidh tú arís choíche. 'Such nonsense you'll never hear again.'
Coischéim níor bhog sé. 'He didn't move a step.'

Other alterations of word order carry with them additional grammatical effects; some of these will be introduced in later chapters.

Non-declarative sentences

The previous chapter described the formation of sentences expressing simple statements, known as *declarative sentences*. This chapter covers the structure of other sentence types, including questions and commands, as well as negation of various sentences.

Negation of statements

The negation of a declarative sentence like those shown in the last chapter is formed very simply, by adding the negative particle *ní* before the verb. The particle causes lenition of the following verb's initial consonant, as discussed further in 6.3.

Ní labhraíonn Brian Gaeilge.	'Brian doesn't speak Irish.'
Ní imreoidh siad cártaí.	'They won't play cards.'

For the negation of a subordinate clause, like the complement clauses mentioned in the previous chapter, the complementizer *go* is replaced by *nach* in most tenses.

Deir sé *go* labhraíonn sé Gaeilge.	'He says *that* he speaks Irish.'
Deir sé *nach* labhraíonn sé Gaeilge.	'He says *that* he does *not* speak Irish.'
Deir sé *go* rithfidh sé.	'He says *that* he will run.'
Deir sé *nach* rithfidh sé.	'He says *that* he will *not* run.'

As indicated by the italicized elements in the examples above, the single word *nach* contains both the complementizer and the negative marker in a single form.

For the past-tense forms of regular verbs, the negative particle *níor* is used instead, which becomes *nár* in subordinate clauses and negative questions (see also Chapter 9).

Níor rith siad.	'They didn't run.'
Deir sé nár rith siad.	'He says they didn't run.'
Tá mé cinnte nár labhair sé.	'I am certain that he didn't speak.'

6.1.1 Negative polarity

Certain words are found primarily in negative and interrogative contexts, where they replace others found in only in declarative statements.

Ní raibh *mórán* daoine ann aréir. 'Not many people were there last night.'
An raibh *mórán* daoine ann?   'Were many people there?

Compare: **Bhí *neart* daoine ann aréir.** 'Many people were there last night.'
or **Bhí *go leor* daoine ann.**   'Many people were there.'

Mórán does also occur in affirmative sentences in some dialects, but more rarely. In negative contexts, however, *mórán* always replaces the affirmative words of quantity.

Other examples of negative/affirmative vocabulary shifts are shown below.

Ní raibh siad in Albain *riamh*.   'They were never in Scotland.'
An raibh tú in Albain *riamh*?   'Were you ever in Scotland?'

Compare: **Bhí siad in Albain *uair amháin*.**   'They were in Scotland once.'

When *riamh* is used affirmatively, its meaning becomes closer to *always*.

Sin a chuala mé riamh.   'That's what I've always heard.'

Ar bith is used after nouns to emphasize the absence of that noun in negative contexts.

Ní fheicim duine ar bith.   'I don't see anyone.'
An bhfeiceann tú duine ar bith?   'Do you see anyone?'

Compare: **Feicim duine éigin.**   'I see someone.'

Similarly, *ar chor ar bith* highlights the negativity of a sentence as a whole.

Níor tháinig siad ar chor ar bith.   'They didn't come at all.'

Rud ar bith or *Dada/tada* 'nothing' (choice of initial consonant is regional) has negative polarity as well, occurring only with verbs marked as negative or interrogative, or alone in responses.

Ní bhfuair mé tada.   'I didn't get anything; I got nothing.'
Cad a rinne tú? Rud ar bith!   'What did you do? Nothing!'

Duine ar bith is the equivalent form for people.

Ní fhaca mé duine ar bith.   'I didn't see anyone.'

Finally, the following pair show polarity differences for agreement with a previous statement.

Bhí Treasa anseo inné. Bhí Éamonn ann *freisin*.   'Treasa was here yesterday. Éamonn was too.'
Ní raibh Treasa anseo. Ní raibh Éamonn ann *ach oiread*.   'Treasa wasn't here. Éamonn wasn't either.'

6.1.2 Only

To express *only*, Irish relies on a negated verb accompanied by *ach* 'but,' a structure reminiscent of the (relatively rare) English *we didn't eat but a few bites*. The Irish equivalent is the default structure; there is no single word to translate *only* (although *amháin* 'one' can be used in certain non-sentential contexts, e.g., *foireann amháin* 'staff only').

Níor ith mé ach beagán.	'I only ate a little bit.'
Ní fheicim ach clocha.	'I only see rocks. I see nothing but rocks.'
Níor tháinig ach Tadhg.	'Only Tadhg came.'
Ná labhair ach Gaeilge!	'Speak only Irish!'
Ní labhraíonn sí Béarla ach leatsa.	'She speaks English only to you.'
Níl ach iníon amháin agam.	'I have only one daughter.'

There is a tendency to place the phrase introduced by *ach* at the end of the sentence. Thus, alongside the last example above, one might equally hear *Níl agam ach iníon amháin.*

As the examples above indicate, *ach* may be associated with nouns in any position in the sentence. It can also occur with other sentence elements, as in the following.

Níor tháinig siad ach an-deireanach.   'They came only very late.'
Ní dhearna sé ach tae a thabhairt dóibh. 'He only gave them tea/All he did was give them tea.'

6.1.3 Diabhal/dheamhan

The nouns *diabhal* 'devil' and *dheamhan* 'demon' are used colloquially for negation in sentences like the following.

Diabhal neart atá air (= Níl aon neart air).   'It can't be helped.'
Dheamhan deoir a gheobhaidh tú. 'Not a drop will you get.'

In other sentences, *diabhal/dheamhan* replaces the verb altogether, including the very frequent *diabhal a fhios agam* as an emphatic version of *níl a fhios agam* 'I don't know.'

Diabhal fear ar an mbaile nach bhfuil i bhfolach…
'There is not a man in the village who hasn't been in hiding…'

6.1.4 Ulster negatives

Ulster dialects are distinguished from the others by their use of the negative particle *cha*, alongside *ní*. *Cha* becomes *chan* before a vowel or *fh* and causes eclipsis of consonants.

Ní íosfainn - Chan íosfainn. 'I would not eat.'
Ní bhím – Cha mbím.   'I am not (regularly)'
Ní fheicim – Cha bhfeicim. 'I don't see'

Yes/no questions

Questions of the type to be answered with *yes* or *no* are formed by adding the question particle *an* in front of the verb. In the simplest cases, nothing more is needed.

An labhraíonn tú Gaeilge? 'Do you speak Irish?'
An imreoimid cártaí? 'Will we play cards?'

Negative forms of questions can also be used, much as in English, when the questioner expects the answer to be affirmative.

Nach labhraíonn sí Gaeilge? 'Doesn't she speak Irish?

In past tenses, the particles *ar* and *nár* are used, with lenition where appropriate.

Ar imir siad cártaí? 'Did they play cards?'
Ar thuig tú? 'Did you understand?'
Nár thuig tú? 'Didn't you understand?'

6.2.1 Answering yes/no questions

Because Irish has no single words for *yes* or *no*, questions such as these are answered by repeating the verb, or its negative.

An labhraíonn sí Gaeilge?	'Does she speak Irish?'
Labhraíonn.	'Yes.'
Ní labhraíonn.	'No.'

Note that the subject is not normally repeated in answering a question. It may be, but to include it conveys stronger emphasis, often of a contradictory sort:

Nach labhraíonn sí Gaeilge? 'Doesn't she speak Irish?' (i.e., I think so.)
Ní labhraíonn sí! 'No, indeed!' (i.e., She most certainly does not!)'

If, however, the form of the reply is one that includes subject identification in the verb ending, no such emphasis is implied.

An dtuigeann tú Gaeilge?	'Do you understand Irish?'
Tuigim.	'Yes (lit. I understand).'

In subordinate clauses, questions are formed exactly the same way, with *an* before the verb. No other complementizer is needed. These are often referred to as indirect questions in English, where their formation is more complex and varied.

Fiafraigh de an labhraíonn sé Gaeilge.
'Ask him if/whether he speaks Irish.' ('Ask him does he speak Irish.')
Níl mé cinnte an rithfidh sí (nó nach rithfidh).
'I am not sure whether she will run (or not).' ('I am not sure will she run or won't [she] run.')

6.2.2 Tag questions

Much as in English, a verbal form can be added to a statement as a way of confirming the truth of the original statement. This tag is generally of the opposite polarity (affirmative or negative) to that of the original verb.

Imríonn siad go maith, nach n-imríonn? 'They play well, don't they?'
Thuig tú mé, nár thuig? 'You understood me, didn't you?'
Ní thuigeann sí, an dtuigeann? 'She doesn't understand, does she?'

Initial mutations in negative, interrogative, and complement sentences

When the first consonant of a given verb is susceptible to the initial mutations described in Chapter 3, they are affected after negative and question particles in the following ways.

The negative particle *ní* triggers lenition in tenses where the consonant is not already lenited.

Ní thuigim é sin.   'I don't understand that.'
Ní fhanfaidh siad.   'They won't wait.'
Ní bheidh sé sin sábháilte. 'That won't be safe.'

The question particles *an* and *nach* cause eclipsis. Before vowels, *nach* also causes an *n-* to be prefixed to the verb; in this context the /n/ of the particle *an* is clearly pronounced, whereas before a consonant it is often elided.

An dtuigeann tú?   'Do you understand?'

Nach dtuigeann tú? 'Don't you understand?'

An imríonn siad cartaí? 'Do they play cards?'
Nach n-imríonn siad? 'Don't they play?'

The subordinating particle *go* and its negative *nach*, introduced above and in Chapter 5, likewise cause eclipsis of verbs beginning with consonants that are so affected, and prefix *n-* to verbs that begin with a vowel.

Deir sé go dtuigeann sé. 'He says that he understands.'
Deir sé nach dtuigeann sé. 'He says that he doesn't understand.'

Sílim go n-imreoidh siad cártaí. 'I think that they will play cards.'
Sílim nach n-imreoidh siad cártaí. 'I think they won't/don't think they will play cards.'

Where applicable, the lenition that characterizes past-tense and conditional verb forms (cf. Chapter 9) is retained after the past particles *níor, ar, gur,* and *nár*; verbs beginning with vowels are unaffected.

Níor thuig sé.	'He didn't understand.'
Ar thuig sé?	'Did he understand?'
Nár thuig sé?	'Didn't he understand?'
Deir sé gur/nár thuig sé.	'He says that he understood/didn't understand.'
Níor imir siad cártaí.	'They didn't play cards.'
Ar imir siad cártaí?	'Did they play cards?'
Nár imir siad cártaí?	'Didn't they play cards?'
Sílim gur/nár imir siad.	'I think that they played/didn't play.'

Constituent questions

Questions asking for specific missing information are formed with question words at the beginning of the sentence, much as in English. The most common such question words are listed below.

cé	'who'
cad/céard/goidé	'what' (in Munster, Connacht, Ulster, respectively)
cathain/cén uair	'when'
cá/cén áit	'where'

cén chaoi	'how'
cén fáth/tuige	'why'

The remainder of the sentence following these question words has the structure of a relative clause, introduced by the relative complementizer particle *a*. Relative clauses will be discussed further in Chapter 24. A few examples here will serve to illustrate the question type; additional details of these structures and the mutations associated with them will be presented in that chapter.

Cé a labhair?	'Who spoke?'
Cad a dúirt siad?	'What did they say?'
Cá raibh tú?	'Where were you?'

The relative particle *a* does not appear after *cá* 'where?'

Imperatives

Imperative forms are usually addressed to one or more listeners, and constitute a command or request that the listener(s) perform the action expressed by the verb. For a single addressee, the basic stem (the form found in most dictionaries) of regular verbs is used (for irregular verbs, see Chapter 10).

Fan anseo!	'Wait here!'
Ith é sin!	'Eat that!'
Éirigh!	'Get up!'
Labhair Gaeilge le Áine!	'Speak Irish to Áine!'

When there are multiple addressees, the suffix *-igí/-ígí* signals plurality. Single-syllable stems use the first form of the suffix, with a short vowel /i/. For a two-syllable stem like *éirigh*, ending in *-igh*, the second syllable of the base is dropped and the vowel of the plural suffix lengthens to *-ígí*. Other two-syllable stems, illustrated by *labhair* here, lose a short vowel in the second syllable, while retaining any final consonants and use the long-vowel suffix *-ígí*.

Ithigí é!	'Eat it!' (more than one of you)
Fanaigí anseo!	'Wait here!' (both/all of you)
Éirígí!	'Get up!'
Labhraígí Gaeilge!	'Speak Irish!'

The spelling variations in the plural forms of these examples depend on the final consonant quality, and are found throughout all the verb forms to be described in later chapters. The plural ending *-igí* (or *-ígí* for second-conjugation verbs) is added to verbs ending in a slender consonant, and the letter *a* is added to the spelling if the verb ends in a broad consonant.

This plural form is sometimes reduced to *-(a)í*.

Fanaí anseo! 'Wait here!'

Other imperative forms, such as the third-person *Let them eat cake!* type, are relatively rare, and are formed with distinct suffixes. They will be covered in .

Direct commands do not appear in subordinate clauses, apart from direct quotations, where they are formed exactly as described in this section.

Negative imperatives, telling someone not to do something, use the preverbal particle *ná*.

Ná fan anseo!	'Don't wait here!'
Ná labhair Gaeilge le Peige!	'Don't speak Irish to Peige!'
Ná fanaigí!	'Don't wait!' (to two or more people)

Ná has no effect on a consonant, but prefixes *h* to a verb that begins with a vowel.

Ná héirigh! 'Don't get up!'
Ná habair é! 'Don't say it!'
Ná héirígí! 'Don't get up!'

Chapter 7

Being and having

Expressions of being in Irish rely on two verbal forms that are quite unlike other regular verbs in a number of ways. Each is used for some, but not all, of the functions of English *be*. Their forms and the contexts in which they occur are described in this chapter, along with the ways each can be used when signaling possession.

The copula *is*

The copula *is* links two nouns or noun phrases, as in *I am Bridget* or *Pat is a lawyer*. Although translated with the English verb *be*, the copula is unlike ordinary Irish verbs in a number of ways. In fact, it is sometimes called a defective verb, because it lacks the full range of tense distinctions characteristic of other verbs, and some linguists do not consider it to be a verb at all (e.g., Ahlqvist 1972). It functions more like a particle attached to the beginning of another word. Unlike ordinary Irish verbs, it is never stressed, can be omitted, and never occurs alone without something following it. In effect, the copula makes a predicate of whatever it attaches to, linking it to the subject that accompanies it.

7.1.1 Forms of the copula

The copula is never conjugated for different subjects as most verbs can be (see Chapter 11); all parts of copula sentences are expressed by separate words or phrases. It also has only two tense forms. *Is* expresses present (occasionally, future) meaning, and *ba* (with lenition of a following consonant, or contraction to *b'* before a vowel) is used for past and conditional meanings.

Present/future:	**Is bainisteoir mé.**	'I am a manager.'
Past/conditional:	**Ba bhainisteoir í.**	'She was/would be a manager.'
	B'iascaire é.	'He was/would be a fisherman.'

When it is important to distinguish time reference, a construction consisting of the appropriate tense of *bí* (introduced below) and a prepositional phrase can be used (see also Chapter 14).

Tá mé i mo bhainisteoir.   'I am a manager (lit. I am in my manager).'
Beidh siad ina múinteoirí.   'They will be teachers.'

Most standard question and negative particles used with the copula are the same in form as the verbal particles described in Chapter 6, but instead of preceding the copula, they replace, or include it. Thus, in contexts where the copula is required, *ní* means *is not*, *an* (in some dialects *ar*) means *is?* and *nach* means *isn't?* To introduce a subordinate clause with a copula, *gur* is used in place of *go + is* and *nach* is used for the corresponding negative statements. The copula forms of these particles do not cause lenition or eclipsis in the present tense, as they do before standard verbs. The examples below are all present tense.

Ní feirmeoir é.	'He is not a farmer.'
Ní iascaire é ach oiread.	'He's not a fisherman either.'
An dochtúir thú?	'Are you a doctor?'
Nach múinteoir í?	'Isn't she a teacher?'
Deir sé gur feirmeoir é.	'He says that he's a farmer.'
Deir sé nach iascaire é.	'He says that he is not a fisherman.'

Before vowels, *gur* appears as *gurb*, and *ar* (in dialects that use it) becomes *ab*. There is considerable dialect variation in the forms of the copula, but the standard forms will always be recognized.

Ab innealtóir thú?   'Are you an engineer?'
Deir Pádraig gurb innealtóir é. 'Pádraig says he's an engineer.'

With *ba*, the official standard forms of the negative, question, and subordinate copula are *níor*, *ar*, *nár*, and *gur*, which cause lenition of a following consonant. Before vowels they take the forms *níorbh*, *arbh*, *nárbh*, and *gurbh*. In some spoken varieties, they also may appear as *ní ba*, *an mba*, *nach mba*, and *go mba* instead.

Ar mhaith leat tae?   'Would you like tea?'
An mba mhaith leat tae?
Deir sé gur (or go mba)
mhaith leis caife.   'He says he'd like coffee.'

Indeed, most copula particles show considerable variation in their

spoken forms. Standard forms will be used here for the sake of consistency in this grammar, but it is important to be aware of the variations and learn to recognize them, as they are quite frequent in colloquial usage.

7.1.2 Functions of the copula

In addition to linking nouns, the copula may also introduce an adjective or prepositional phrase in some idiomatic usages. In all cases, the structures and their word order differ from other (verbal) sentence patterns of the language.

7.1.2.1 Class membership

To classify individuals as members of a set, or group of individuals, the copula precedes an indefinite (non-specific) noun or phrase that names the class and functions in place of a verb. The subject, i.e., the individual identified as a member of the class, comes last. The examples presented above are all of this type. Third-person pronouns do not have the usual subject forms but rather appear without their initial *s*: *é, í, iad* (see Chapter 17 for pronoun forms). If the subject is a definite noun or noun phrase (referring to a specific individual), a pronoun of matching gender and number precedes it in most dialects, but not in all. Examples are given below.

Is dlíodóir í.	'She is an attorney.'
Is siopa é sin.	'That is a shop.'
Is múinteoir (é) Éamonn.	'Éamonn is a teacher.'
Is múinteoirí (iad) mo thuismitheoirí.	'My parents are teachers.'
Is leabhar maith (é) *Cré na Cille.*	'*Cré na Cille* is a good book.'

7.1.2.2 Adjective modifiers

When a noun predicate is modified, as in the last example, the order of noun and adjective can be switched, placing a definite article between them. This has the pragmatic effect of shifting the emphasis to the description (it is assumed we know that *Cré na Cille* is a book; the speaker is focusing on its quality).

Is maith an leabhar é *Cré na Cille.*	'*Cré na Cille* is a *good* book.'
Is iontach an ceoltóir é Stiofán.	'Stiofán is a *wonderful* musician.'
Is deas an bhean í Caitlín.	'Caitlín is a *nice* woman.'
Is breá an lá é.	'It's a *fine* day.'

This usage is most frequent with adjectives expressing evaluations.

7.1.2.3 Equation

In other sentences, *is* links two nouns or phrases with definite reference, such as names, pronouns, and nouns with a possessor or a definite article *an/na* (cf. Chapter 19). The copula indicates that the two phrases refer to the same individual. In such sentences, one can think of *is* as functioning rather like an equals sign (=) linking the noun phrases separated by slashes below:

' **Is/mise/Áine.**	'I am Áine.'
An/tusa/bean an tí?	'Are you the landlady?'
Is/é Tomás/mo dheartháir.	'Tomás is my brother.'
Is/í Sorcha/an bhanaltra.	'Sorcha is the nurse.'
Is/iad Bríd agus Cáit/mo dheirfiúracha.	'Bríd and Cáit are my sisters.'

Only a pronoun can immediately follow the equational copula. Any (definite) noun following *is* must be preceded by a simple pronoun of matching gender and number, as above. This extra pronoun adds no meaning and is not translated, but is merely a grammatical requirement of *is*.

The word order of equational sentences does not always follow the predicate-subject order of the classificatory sentences. Usually, if one of the two individuals linked is expressed by a stressed pronoun (two-syllable forms, or reinforced with *féin*–'self,' as described further in Chapter 17), that pronoun comes first, as above. If there is no stressed pronoun in the sentence, but a proper name is present, that (along with its agreement pronoun) comes first.

Is mise Áine.	'I am Áine.'
Is í Deirdre a dheirfiúr.	'Deirdre is his sister.'

An unstressed pronoun subject (referring to someone mentioned previously) always comes last. In the following example, it is the final *iad* that equates to *they* in the English translation. The first *iad*, the required pronoun described above, is not translated.

An bhfeiceann tú na buachaillí sin? Is iad mo pháistí iad.
'Do you see those boys? They are my children.'
(Second **iad** = **na buachaillí** from the question.)

If two common noun phrases are linked, the first is usually interpreted as the new information of the sentence. Thus, the first sentence below can be taken to answer the implicit question: *which person is the teacher?*

Is é an sagart an múinteoir. 'The priest is the teacher.'

The opposite order answers the question: 'which person is the priest?'

Is é an múinteoir an sagart. 'The teacher is the priest.'

In contrast, sentences like *Is mise Áine* could be used to answer either *Who are you?* or *Who (which one of you) is Áine?* Similarly for *Is í Deirdre a dheirfiúr* 'Deirdre is his sister.'

In summary, the word order requirements of equational sentences with the copula adhere to the following hierarchy of word order: *pronoun > name > new information noun > old information noun*.

Following *is*, whichever noun phrase is farthest left in this hierarchy will appear first, followed by the other.

7.1.2.4 Adjective and prepositional predicates

In certain cases, *is* can be followed by an adjective functioning alone as predicate. This usage varies in frequency across dialects and individuals.

Is deas é sin!	'That's nice!'
Is fíor sin.	'That's true.'
Is deacair a rá.	'It's difficult to say.'

This is a vestige of older forms of the language, which always used the copula with adjective predicates. Nowadays, colloquial usage more commonly depends on structures with *bí*, described below, but a number of copula forms like those above remain in regular use.

Likewise, some idiomatic uses of prepositional phrases rely on the copula. Common examples include expressions of ownership and origin.

Is le Nuala an leabhar seo.	'This book belongs to Nuala.'
Is as an bhFrainc é Pierre.	'Pierre is from France.'

Finally, a number of idioms consisting of both an adjective and a prepositional phrase are formed with the copula. In these structures, the grammatical subject of the English translation is the object of a preposition in Irish, and the grammatical subject in Irish is the direct object in the English translation. The idiomatic phrase and the verb that translates it are underlined in the examples below.

Is maith le **Nóra caife.**	'Nóra *likes* coffee.'
Is fearr le **Breandán tae.**	'Breandán *prefers* tea.'
Ní maith do **pháistí é sin.**	'That *is not good for* children.'
Ba cheart do **Shíle imeacht.**	'Síle *should* leave.'

These are just a few examples of many, to illustrate the pattern, but they are among the most common.

7.1.3 Omission of the copula

In the present tense, *is* frequently may be omitted, although it is still understood.

Iascaire é.	'He is a fisherman.'
Mise an múinteoir.	'I'm the teacher.'
Maith an cailín thú!	'[You're a] Good girl!'
As Meiriceá í.	'She's from America.'

If an extra pronoun would be required after the copula, that pronoun is also omitted with the copula.

Seán an bainisteoir.   'Seán is the manager.'

More often, however, in these equational sentences, the copula is not entirely omitted, but contracts with the pronoun to *'sé, 'sí, 'siad.*

'Sé Seán an bainisteoir

This contraction is very common, almost universal, in spoken Irish, though perhaps less frequent in writing.

7.1.4 Answering copula questions

As noted above, *is* cannot occur alone. As a result, questions cannot be answered by simply repeating *is*; rather, it must be accompanied by the predicate or by a pronoun referring to the predicate being questioned.

In equational sentences, since a pronoun always follows the copula as described above, that pronoun remains with the copula in answering questions of the *yes/no* type. *Is* usually contracts to *'s* before vowels.

An í sin do dheirfiúr?	'Is that your sister?'
−Ní hí. Is í mo chol ceathar í.	'No, she's my cousin.'
An iad sin do pháistí?	'Are those your children?'
−'Siad (= is iad)	'Yes [they are].'

An tusa an rúnaí?	'Are you the secretary?'
–Is mé.	'Yes.'
–Ní mé.	'No.'

In contrast, classifying sentences are answered by attaching a special pronoun, *ea*, to the copula, giving *is ea*, often contracted in speech to *'sea*; the negative form is *ní hea*. This is used regardless of the gender or number of the subject or predicate.

An aisteoir i?	'Is she an actor?'
–'Sea.	'Yes.'
An mac léinn thú?	'Are you a student?'
–Ní hea.	'No.'
An sagairt iad?	'Are they priests?'
–Ni hea.	'No.'

Note that *ní* prefixes an *h* to pronouns (also *ní hé, ní hí, ní hiad*) in the examples above. Its use with nouns is more erratic, however. A few idiomatic expressions also favor the use of *h*, as in: *Ní hiontas* 'No wonder,' *Ní heol dom*–'I don't know.' But, as seen already in examples at the beginning of this chapter, the *h* is typically omitted between *ní* and a noun in classification contexts: *Ní iascaire é* 'he is not a fisherman.'

Questions with adjective and preposition predicates are usually answered with *'sea/ní hea* too, but an adjective may be repeated instead.

An as Sasana thú?	'Are you from England?'
–Ní hea. As an Astráil.	'No, from Australia.'
Nach breá an lá é?	'Isn't it a nice day?'
–'Sea.	
–Is breá.	'Yes.'

The verb *bí*

The copula is used primarily to link nominal subjects and predicates, as well as in a few uses with adjectives and prepositions. For all other expressions of being, when the predicate is some element other than a noun, the verb *bí* (called the *substantive verb* in some grammars) is used.

The syntax of *bí* in simple sentences is much like that of any other verb, as described in Chapter 5: the verb comes first, followed by a subject. The predicate, i.e., what is being said about the subject, follows the subject, in the same position as a direct object of transitive verbs. The predicate fills in information that the speaker is giving

about the subject. The verb *bí* is fully inflected for all tenses but is highly irregular in its forms. The most common forms are illustrated in the examples below; the remaining forms will be introduced in Chapter 10.

7.2.1 Present, past, and future

The simple present tense of *bí* consists of the independent form *tá* and dependent form *fuil*, which is eclipsed after *an, nach, go. Ní* contracts with *fhuil* (*fh* being unpronounced) and is written *níl*, giving the following forms.

Tá sé tinn.	'He is sick.'
Níl sé tinn.	'He is not sick.'
An bhfuil sé tinn?	'Is he sick?'
Nach bhfuil sé tinn?	'Isn't he sick?'
Sílim go bhfuil sé tinn.	'I think that he is sick.'
Sílim nach bhfuil sé tinn.	'I think that he isn't sick/I don't think he's sick.'

The present tense of *bí* can also signal a state that started in the past and continues into the present. A time frame is usually mentioned in these cases, where English uses the form *have/has been*. The time word generally precedes the predicate.

An bhfuil tú i bhfad in Éirinn?	'Have you been in Ireland long?'
Tá mé bliain ag obair anseo.	'I've been working here for a year'/ 'I'm a year working here.'

Uniquely among Irish verbs, *bí* has a second present tense form, *bíonn*, which is used for habitual states. Thus, in contrast with the initial examples of this section, which refer to sickness at the moment of speech, the present habitual indicates a repeated or regular state of affairs. In form it resembles the present habitual of regular verbs of the second conjugation class (see Chapter 9).

Bíonn sé tinn.	'He is (regularly) sick; he is sickly.'

The independent form of the past tense is created regularly by leniting the imperative stem *bí.* The irregular dependent form *raibh* is used after all particles, and may be pronounced either /ro/ or/rev'/, depending on the regional variety.

Bhí sé tinn.	'He was sick.'
Ní raibh sé tinn.	'He wasn't sick.'
An raibh sé tinn?	'Was he sick?'
Deir sé go/nach raibh sé tinn.	'He says he was/wasn't sick.'

The future stem of *bí* is *beidh* in both independent and dependent contexts. Particles cause mutations regularly.

Beidh sé tinn.	'He will be sick.'
Ní bheidh sé tinn.	'He won't be sick.'
An mbeidh sé tinn?	'Will he be sick?'
Sílim go/nach mbeidh sé tinn.	'I think that he will/won't be sick.'

The remaining tenses of *bí* will be introduced in Chapter 10, along with other irregular verbs.

7.2.2 Functions of bí

Sentences with *bí* indicate existence, location, or description of the subject. They can also signal an ongoing action in the progressive form of a verb.

7.2.2.1 Existence

Simple existence can be expressed with *ann* in predicate position.

Tá Dia ann.	'God exists. There is a God.'
Níl a leithéid de rud ann.	'There's no such thing.'

The adverb *ann*, literally the singular masculine pronoun form of *in*–'in' (cf. Chapter 22), can usually be translated as *in it* or *there*, but in the above cases it just serves as a placeholder filling the predicate position of the sentence (it is analogous to English *there*, which fills the subject position in a similar way). Sentences with *bí* always consist of three elements: a form of *bí*, a subject, and a predicate, which is whatever is being said about the subject. The predicate may be an adjective, adverb, prepositional phrase; only a noun (which requires the copula) is not permitted. If a specific location is mentioned, *ann* is not necessary.

Tá sneachta ar an sliabh.	'There is snow on the mountain.'
Níl nathracha in Éirinn.	'There are no snakes in Ireland.'

Ann may be used, not only to indicate general existence as in the first examples, but also if a location has been mentioned and the speaker does not wish to repeat it.

Bhí sé fuar sa tuaisceart inné.	**Bhí sneachta ann, freisin.**
'It was cold in the north yesterday.	There was snow (there), too.'

As the translation shows, one can just omit repeating the location in

English, but this is not done in Irish. Something must fill that third slot; in the absence of anything else, *ann* is what is used.

7.2.2.2 Location

When the subject of a sentence refers to a specific individual (i.e., is definite in form), the very same structure specifies the location of that individual.

Tá mo leabhar ar an mbord.	'My book is on the table.'
Tá Caitríona ar an gcósta thiar.	'Caitríona is on the west coast.'
Bhí na gasúir ar scoil.	'The children were at school.'
An mbeidh tú anseo?	'Will you be here?'
Beidh mé ann.	'I'll be there.'

7.2.2.3 Description

The descriptive use of *bí* has already been illustrated in the initial examples of this section, and will be elaborated in the following paragraphs. First, it is essential to distinguish between two uses of adjectives, predicative and attributive.

Adjectives appearing in the third position of a *bí* sentence are known as *predicate adjectives*; their role in the sentence is to assert that the characteristic specified by the adjective belongs to the subject noun. In contrast, the attributive use of an adjective helps to limit the range of individuals referred to by a noun to just that subset with the attribute named by the adjective, which is commonly said to modify the noun; in such cases the adjective forms part of the noun phrase. In the sentence *The dog is brown*, *brown* is a predicate, asserting a descriptive fact about the dog. But in the noun phrase *the brown dog*, *brown* is used attributively, eliminating from consideration all dogs that are not brown, and helping the listener to identify which dog is intended by the speaker in sentences such as *Eleanor is afraid of the brown dog*, *The brown dog died*, or *Where is the brown dog?*

In the following examples of predicate adjectives in Irish, the three components of the sentence are separated by slashes.

Tá / an leanbh / tinn.	'The baby is sick.'
Tá / mé / tuirseach.	'I am tired.'
Tá / Niall / saibhir.	'Niall is rich.'

In contrast, when adjectives modify a noun (i.e., are *attributive*), they form a unit with it: *an gasúr tinn* 'the sick child,' *duine saibhir* 'a rich person,' and such longer phrases can also be subjects of *bí* (or of any verb). When an adjective is part of the subject phrase, the point of the

sentence is not to specify that the person (or thing) has the property of the adjective. Rather, the property is assumed, and something else is to be said about that entity.

Tá / fear saibhir / ag an doras.	'A rich man is at the door.'
Tá /an leabhar mór/ ar an mbord.	'The big book is on the table.'
Bhí /an leanbh tinn /cantalach.	'The sick baby was cranky/cross.'

Here, the new information is not that the man is rich or the book big, but rather where they are; not the baby's health, but its state of mind. The wealth, size, and sickness are merely background information that helps identify which man, book, or baby the speaker is talking about.

In English the position of the adjective is different in the two uses, but because the adjective in Irish follows the noun in both cases, its function is not obvious from word order alone. Both a predicate and an attributive adjective may occur in the same sentence as in the last example above; the different functions are signalled by slashes. Contrast the above with a predicate use of *tinn.*

Bhí / an leanbh tinn / cantalach.	'The sick baby was cranky/cross.'
Bhí /an leanbh / tinn.	'The baby was sick.'

This distinction has several grammatical consequences.

As already noted, the adverb *ann* is needed to fill the third position (if there is no other predicate) when an adjective is part of a subject of *bí,* but not when it serves as a predicate.

Tá / leaba chompordach / ann.	'There is a comfortable bed (there).'
Tá / an leaba/ compordach.	'The bed is comfortable.'

The examples above also show that attributive adjectives change form in a phrase where they modify a feminine noun; lenition on the adjective in the first sentence shows agreement with the noun's gender (cf. Chapter 18). As the second sentence shows, predicate adjectives do not show agreement with feminine subjects. Similarly, agreement with plural nouns is found only within the phrase, but not in predicate position.

Several adjectives expressing evaluative judgments differ further in their normal predicate forms. *Maith*–'good, well' will serve as an example. Within a noun phrase, it is like any other adjective; it follows the noun it describes, is lenited if the noun is feminine, and agrees for plurality as well (see Chapter 18 for further discussion).

Tá / fear maith/ anseo.	'There is a good man here.'
Tá / bean mhaith / anseo.	'There is a good woman here.'

Tá / daoine maithe / anseo.	'There are good people here.'

In predicate position, however, not only is there no agreement, but the adjective is generally preceded by the particle *go*.

Tá / an bia / go maith.	'The food is good.' (masculine)
Tá / an deoch / go maith.	'The drink is good.' (feminine)
Tá / na daoine / go maith.	'The people are good.' (plural)

Other adjectives that regularly behave this way are listed below.

ainnis	'miserable'
deas	'nice'
álainn	'beautiful'
dona	'bad'
aoibhinn	'pleasant'
iontach	'wonderful'
breá	'fine'
olc	'evil, bad, nasty'

Go does not cause mutation of any consonants, but prefixes *h* to adjectives beginning with a vowel.

Tá an áit seo go haoibhinn.	'This place is pleasant.' (compare attributive *áit aoibhinn* 'a pleasant place')
Tá sé sin go hiontach!	'That's wonderful!' (compare *obair iontach* 'wonderful work')

7.2.2.4 Progressive sentences

Finally, a phrase with *ag* 'at, by,' plus a verb form known as the *verbal noun* (cf. Chapters 13–14) can fill the third position after *bí*, making a sentence like the English progressive.

Tá siad ag obair go crua.	'They are working hard.'
Bhí na gasúir ag foghlaim Béarla.	'The children were learning English.'

These structures will be covered in greater detail in later chapters.

Possession and ownership

Irish has no verb meaning *have*. Instead, possession is shown by an idiomatic structure using *bí* and the preposition *ag*–'at, by' to introduce the possessor.

Tá carr nua ag Peadar.	'Liam has a new car.'
An bhfuil an eochair ag aon duine?	'Does anyone have the key?'
–Tá sé ag Colm.	'Colm has it.'

7.3.1 Ownership: le

When the subject is indefinite (non-specific), as in the first sentence above, the sentence indicates ownership. When the subject is definite, as in the second example, the possession is usually interpreted as more temporary; the person in possession of the key may or may not be its owner. To specify ownership in these cases, an idiom with the copula and a predicate introduced by *le*–'with' is used instead.

Is le Colm an eochair.	'The key is Colm's. Colm owns the key.'
Cé leis an eochair seo?	'Who owns this key? Whose key is this?'
−**Is le Colm í.**	'It's Colm's.'
An leatsa an eochair seo?	'Is this key yours?'
− **Is liom.**	'Yes.'
− **Ní liom. Is le Colm í.**	'No, it's Colm's.'

Phrases indicating ownership with *le* repeat the prepositional phrase in answers rather than using *'sea.*

An leatsa an carr sin?	'Is that car yours?'
−**Is liom** 'Yes.' −**Ní liom**	'No.'

Pronominal forms, such as those above, that occur with *le* and other prepositions are presented in Chapter 22.

7.3.2 Physical and mental states

Like a number of other European languages, Irish uses idioms of possession to express various physical and mental states; e.g., a sentence equivalent to *I have hunger* is used to translate *I am hungry*. These idiomatic expressions are formed like the possessive structures at the beginning of this section, with *bí*, but many use a different preposition, namely *ar* 'on.'

Tá ocras ar Éanna.	'Éanna is hungry.'
Tá áthas ar Neasa.	'Neasa is happy.'
Bhí brón ar 'chuile dhuine.	'Everyone was sad.'
Bhí fearg ar m'athair.	'My father was angry.'

For these and a number of other mental states, a structure using a noun subject and *ar* is the default usage. Many of these nouns do not even have an adjective form, or if they do, it is not widely used. Others include *aiféala* 'regret,' *amhras* 'doubt,' *clú* or *cáil* 'fame,' *deifir* 'a hurry,' *drogall* 'reluctance,' *eagla* or *faitíos* 'fear,' *imní* 'worry,' *iontas* 'wonder' (which is used to mean 'surprised'), *moill* 'delay,' *náire* 'shame,' *tart* 'thirst.' In addition, most illnesses are expressed with this idiom, e.g., *ailse* 'cancer,' *slaghdán* 'a cold,' *tinneas cinn* 'a headache,' etc.

Tá slaghdán ar Eibhlín.	'Eibhlín has a cold.'

In a similar vein, the expression *Céard atá ort?* 'What's the matter with you?' may be mentioned. This may refer to physical ailments like those above or more metaphorically to a bad mood or negative response.

A few other mental states are expressed with the same idiom, but exceptionally use the regular possessive preposition *ag*, for example, *éad* 'jealousy' and *foighne/foighde* 'patience.' Both *ag* and *ar* together express the notion of debt: *Tá airgead ag Máire ar Úna* 'Úna owes Máire money.'

Still others rely on predicate adjectives as in English to express the state, although a less frequent idiomatic alternative may also be available. For example, tiredness or bad mood are normally expressed as:

Tá Úna tuirseach.	'Úna is tired.'
Tá Niamh cantalach.	'Niamh is cross.'

However, *tá tuirse ar Úna* and *tá cantal ar Niamh* may also be heard on occasion.

To express the onset of one of these states, the adjectival forms are introduced by *éirigh*, 'become.'

Tá mé ag éirí tuirseach.	'I am becoming tired'
Éireoidh tú tinn.	'You'll get sick.'

However, the nominal states express onset with a circumlocution using *tar* 'come.'

Tá slaghdán ag teacht ar Eibhlín.	'Eibhlín is getting a cold.'
Tháinig fearg ar Eoghan ansin.	'Eoghan got angry then.'

The two structures also differ in the way causation is expressed. The adjectives use a form of *déan*–'make,' whereas the nouns are introduced by *cuir*–'put.'

Rinne sé sin tinn mé.	'That made me sick.'
Ná cuir fearg ar Eoghan.	'Don't make Eoghan angry.'

Focus and emphasis with cleft sentences

A sentence typically contains a combination of *old information,* which provides background or identifies the topic of the sentence and is assumed to be already familiar to the speaker's audience, and *new information* not assumed to be known to the audience. A *cleft* sentence structure more explicitly divides a sentence into new and old information by drawing attention to a particular element of a sentence as more salient (new or unexpected) relative to the rest of the sentence. In English, it takes the form shown below:

'*It's my brother who lives in Galway*' (i.e., not my sister, son, friend, etc.)

This structure contrasts with the relatively neutral sentence form: *My brother lives in Galway*.

A simple declarative sentence like this can be construed as providing all new information in a narrative, or as answering a (possibly unspoken) question such as: *What happened? What's new?* The presumptive question that the cleft sentence addresses is: *Who lives in Galway?* or maybe: *Which of your relatives lives in Galway?* It is known, or assumed, that someone does, so the missing information is simply who that person is. The word or phrase in initial position is known as the *focus* of the sentence. Other elements can represent the focus of cleft sentences too; if it is known that I have a brother, then to draw the hearer's attention to where my brother lives, I could say: *It is in Galway that my brother lives.*

In Irish, cleft sentences are used to similar effect, and are formed very like the English ones, with the copula *is* preceding the focused element and the rest of the sentence taking the form of a relative clause introduced with the particle *a* (see Chapter 24 for further details on relative clauses).

Is mise a d'oscail an doras.   'It's I who opened the door.'

| Is toirneach a chloiseann tu. | 'It's thunder that you hear.' |
| Is i nGaillimh atá sé ina chónaí. | 'It's in Galway that he lives.' |

Past-tense events

When the main event described by the verb is in the past, a past-tense form of the copula can precede the clefted constituent.

| Ba go Gaillimh a chuaigh sé. | 'It was to Galway that he went.' |

This is not always adhered to in the current usage; younger speakers may use *is* even with past-tense verbs.

| (Is) go Gaillimh a chuaigh sé. | 'It's to Galway that he went.' |

When a cleft sentence is embedded under a past-tense verb, the past forms of the copula are used.

| Dúirt sé gurbh í Aoife a rinne é. | 'He said it was Aoife who did it.' |

Extra pronoun

When the noun in focus position is a proper name, as in the last example above, or otherwise definite in reference (i.e., marked with the definite article *an/na* 'the' or a possessor), it is separated from *is* by a pronoun that agrees with it in gender and number, as described in Chapter 7. This pronoun is not translated in English.

Is é *mo dheartháir* atá ina chónaí i nGaillimh.	'It's my brother who lives in Galway.'
B' í *Eithne* a d'oscail an doras.	'It was Eithne who opened the door.'
Is iad *na fir úd* a labhraíonn Fraincis.	'It's those men who speak French.'

Cleft sentences in both languages often evoke an implied contrast, or sometimes indicate an explicit one: *my brother* (not my uncle) called me, or he called *yesterday* (not last Friday, as was thought). As the italic font here is meant to suggest, the same emphasis is usually conveyed in spoken English by added stress on the word in focus. In Irish, however, extra stress is used much more rarely, and generally sounds unnatural. Thus, the cleft sentence is used with far greater frequency in Irish, and is the best choice when one wants to focus attention on a particular element in the sentence as the primary information being conveyed.

Optionality of *is*

The copula is often omitted altogether from a cleft sentence (provided the sentence is not negative or a question). Any agreeing pronoun that would follow *is* is also omitted in this case.

Mise a chuaigh go Gaillimh.	'*I* went to Galway.'
Go Gaillimh a chuaigh mé.	'I went to *Galway*.'
Sorcha a dhéanann an t-arán.	'It's *Sorcha* who makes the bread.'
Le Diarmaid a tháinig sí.	'It was with Diarmaid that she came.'

Alternatively, the copula and pronoun may contract as described in Chapter 7, as in:

'Sí Sorcha a dhéanann é.	'It's Sorcha who makes/does it.'

Cleft questions/negatives

Questions and negatives may appear in cleft sentences, as well.

An tusa a íocfaidh as?	'Will *you* pay for it? Is it you who will pay for it?'
Ní mise atá ag imeacht.	'*I'm* not leaving. It isn't me who's leaving.'

In these cases, what is being questioned or denied is not the occurrence of the event (someone paying, or leaving), but rather who the person is. This focus is conveyed most clearly by the second translation in each example. As noted, however, English speakers can also use extra stress on the word (shown in italic) that is the focus of attention, as in the first translation, an option not generally available in Irish. The same structure can be used to call attention to other parts of the sentence in questions and negatives as well.

Ní inniu atá se ag dul go Gaillimh.
'He isn't going to Galway *today*.' (implied: he is going to Galway, but not today.)
Ní go Gaillimh atá sé ag dul.
'He isn't going *to Galway*.' (implied: he's going somewhere, but not Galway.)
An inniu atá sé ag dul go Gaillimh?
'Is it today he's going to Galway?' (implied: I know he's going to Galway, but want to confirm when.)

Even verbs can occupy the focus position at the beginning of the sentence. When they do, a nominal form of the verb (the *verbal noun*,

cf. Chapter 13) is used, with an appropriate form of the verb *déan* 'do, make' filling the verb's position in what follows.

Dul go Gaillimh a rinne sé. 'Go to Galway is what he did.'

Sentences such as this are rare enough, but they can be used as needed, and are less awkward than the English translation suggests.

Embedded clefts

Subordinate clauses can also be clefted for similar focus. Such clauses are introduced by *gur.*, the complement form of *is. Gur* incorporates both the copula and the complementizer *go*, introduced in Chapter 5.

Deir sé gur tusa atá in ann Seapáinis a labhairt.
'He says that it's you who can speak Japanese.'
Sílim gur go Gaillimh atá sé ag dul.
'I think it's to Galway that he's going.'

Focus in copula sentences

Although sentences with the copula have a certain inherent focus on the predicate, further contrastive focus in classificatory sentences can be added using one of the structures below.

Neutral		Focused
Is sagart é Niall.	'Niall is a priest.'	Sagart is ea Niall.
Sagart atá in Niall.		
Is innealtóir mé.	'I'm an engineer.'	Innealtóir is ea mé
		Innealtóir atá ionam.

The first of the focus structures above is most common in Munster Irish. The second is typical of Connacht. See Chapter 22 for the form *ionam* and other pronominal forms of the preposition *in*.

Pseudocleft sentences

Another sentence structure, similar in effect to the cleft sentences described above, the pseudocleft reverses the order of known and new information. In English, the following are pseudoclefts.

'What he said was, "Well done".'
'What they want is power rather than money.'

In Irish, comparable sentences are introduced by a pronoun contracted with *is*, typically *séard* or *sé*, and a relative clause containing the known or presupposed information; the second half of the sentence contains the focus information, usually introduced (and separated from the first clause) by *ná* 'namely.'

Séard a déarfaidh sé leo ná 'Tá díomá orm.'
  'What he'll say to them is "I'm disapppointed".'
Sé a chonaic muid ná éan mór millteach.
   What we saw was a huge bird.'

Such sentences are considerably less frequent than cleft sentences, but are nonetheless not completely unknown.

Building blocks – major constituents

Having seen the basic sentence patterns, we turn in this section to describing the internal structure of phrases that form the central components of the sentence, the subject and the predicate. Both can consist of just a single word each, as in 'Tim fell.' More commonly, however, they may be considerably more complex. The first chapters of this section deal with the minimal elements in a verbal phrase, specifically the morphological forms of verbs themselves. Later chapters will introduce the structure of noun phrases (NPs), which can appear not only in subject position, but also in various other positions of a sentence, depending on the semantics of the verb they accompany. The forms of nouns and pronouns, the simplest forms of NPs, will be the primary focus here, with the next section covering still more complex structures.

Verbs and verb phrases

With the exception of sentences involving the copula *is* (see Chapter 7), the predicate of most sentences is minimally composed of a verb, plus any complements it requires and some number of optional adverbial elements (also known as adjuncts). Just how complex a *verb phrase* is depends in part on the requirements of the verb itself, and partly on how much information the speaker chooses to provide about the event the sentence describes. Examples of English verb phrases include: *fell, ate a peach, wants to eat a peach, may drop in on our friends unannounced, promise that they will never do anything like that again, gave a very expensive present to her granddaughter for Christmas last year, left the box on the table next to the Ming vase*, and so on. In Irish, because of its verb-initial word order, the verb is often separated from the other elements of the verb phrase, but the verb and its complements nonetheless form a semantic unit distinct from the subject, and many contemporary analyses treat verb phrases as syntactic units as well. In certain structures, to be covered in later chapters, the verb phrase (VP) components do remain together as a surface syntactic unit.

The morphological forms of the verb contain additional information about time reference of the sentence (tense), mood, and in some cases person of the subject. Rather than duplicating all the paradigms, which can be found in most previously published grammars, we will describe verb formation in narrative style here.

Verb morphology

Regular Irish verbs fall into two classes, differing slightly in their conjugations, that is, the form of the suffixes marking tense. The majority of first-conjugation verbs have one-syllable imperative forms, whereas second-conjugation verbs are disyllabic. Examples are given below.

First-conjugation: **dún, fan, glan, ól, seas, scríobh, bris, rith, tuig,   dóigh, léigh, péinteáil, sábháil**
Second-conjugation: **ceannaigh, socraigh, éirigh, imigh, imir, labhair, oscail, foghlaim**

The imperative forms illustrated above constitute the verb stem, to which tense, mood, and person suffixes are added, as described below and in subsequent chapters.

9.1.1 Tense

The following tenses can be distinguished in the forms of Irish verbs: *present, past, past habitual* (or *imperfect*), and *future*. These are formed with suffixes, and in some tenses the beginning of the verb form also changes. This chapter introduces the suffixes that mark tense only, used whenever the subject is expressed by a separate noun or pronoun. This is the case for the third-person singular (pronoun *sé* or *sí*) in all dialects, which will be used to illustrate, along with a few examples of third-person plural (*siad*). In other persons, usage varies, as will be described in Chapter 11.

9.1.1.1 Present tense

The present-tense suffix for regular verbs is *-(e)ann* in the first conjugation and *-(a)íonn* in the second conjugation. Parenthesized letters here and elsewhere are added as necessary to match the consonant quality of the verb stem and do not affect pronunciation of the suffix.

First-conjugation: **dúnann sé, seasann sí, glanann sé, briseann sé, léann siad, ritheann sí, scríobhann sí, péinteálann sí, tuigeann sé**
Second-conjugation: **ceannaíonn sí, socraíonn sé, éiríonn sí, imíonn sí, imríonn siad, foghlaimíonn sé**

As for imperative plurals, described in Chapter 6, the sequence *(a)igh* at the end of a stem is dropped before adding the tense suffix, and a short vowel in the second syllable of a second-conjugation verb is usually also dropped, reducing the stem to one syllable (*foghlaim*, shown above, is exceptional in retaining the second syllable). These

processes are found with all verbal suffixes.

First-conjugation:	**léann sí**	'she reads'
dóann sé	'it burns'	
ceannaíonn sé	'he buys'	
Second-conjugation:	**imríonn sí**	'she plays'
imíonn sé	'he departs'	
labhraíonn sí	'she speaks'	
osclaíonn sí	'she opens'	

Other variations in form may be noted above, such as changes to the quality of final consonants; these are discussed further in 9.2.

As in English, the present tense usually refers to an action performed habitually (*Itheann sé iasc* 'He eats fish,' i.e., regularly). However, with verbs expressing perceptions and mental states (e.g., *see*, *think*, *believe*), it can refer to the moment of speech as well.

Feiceann sí Cóilín go minic.	'She sees Cóilín often.'
Feiceann sí Cóilín anois.	'She sees Cóilín now.'

To express actions and processes that are ongoing at the moment of speech, a progressive structure is used, similar in form and function to that of English. This will be described further in Chapter 14.

9.1.1.2 Past tense

The past tense of regular verbs is formed by lenition of the verb stem; there is no other tense suffix. When a consonant is not lenitable, the imperative and past-tense forms are identical, except that the latter includes a subject immediately following the verb.

First-conjugation: **dhún sí, sheas sé, ghlan sí, scríobh sí, bhris sé, léigh sé, rith sé, dhóigh sí, thuig sé**
Second-conjugation: **cheannaigh sí, labhair sí, shocraigh sí**

Additionally, verbs beginning with a vowel take the prefix *d'* in the past tense, as do verbs beginning with *f*, which becomes silent when lenited.

First-conjugation: **d'ól sé, d'fhan sé, d'ith sé**
Second-conjugation: **d'imigh sí, d'fhoghlaim sí, d'imir sí, d'éirigh sí**

This *d'* is a remnant of the historical particle *do*, formerly used with all past-tense verbs. In parts of Munster, it is still found with consonant-

initial verbs, although it is not part of the CO. Thus one might hear forms such as *do dhíol sí, do cheannaigh sé,* etc., in Cork or parts of Kerry.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, negative and question particles change form before past-tense verbs, as does the complementizer *go* and its negative counterpart *nach.* Past-tense forms of verbal particles are listed below.

Table 9.1 Preverbal particles

	Non-past	Past
Negative	ní	níor
Question	an	ar
Negative question	nach	nár
Complementizer	go	gur
Negative complement	nach	nár

All past-tense particles cause lenition and the prefixed *d'* is omitted after them.

Níor ghlan sé.	'He did not clean.'
Ar sheas sí?	'Did she stand?'
Níor fhan sé.	'He did not wait.'
Ar éirigh sí?	'Did she get up?'
Nár fhoghlaim sé Fraincis?	'Didn't he learn French?'
Sílim gur ól sí.	'I think she drank.'
Deir sí nár ól sí.	'She says she didn't drink.'

9.1.1.3 Past-habitual tense

The past habitual suffix is *-(e)adh* for first-conjugation verbs and *-(a)íodh* for the second conjugation; the initial consonant is lenited where possible, and *d'* is prefixed to a vowel or *fh* except after particles, as for the simple past tense. This tense is also sometimes called *imperfect* but it has a more limited range of usage than other imperfect forms, such as those of the Romance languages.

First-conjugation:	**dhúnadh sé, sheasadh sí, scríobhadh sí, ritheadh sí, bhriseadh sé, scríobhadh sé, léadh sé, dhóadh sí, d'óladh sí, d'fhanadh sí, thuigeadh sé**
Second-conjugation:	**cheannaíodh sé, shocraíodh sé, d'éiríodh sí, d'fhoghlaimíodh sí**

As its name indicates, the past-habitual forms denote regularly recurring events in the past, whereas the simple past tense is used for specific individual events in the past. English, lacking this distinction in verb forms, uses phrasal constructions as in the translations below when it is necessary to specify habitual meanings of past events:

D'óladh sé fíon dearg.	'He used to drink red wine.'

In a narrative set in the habitual past, the Irish habitual suffixes may be translated by the English auxiliary *would*, as in:

Cheannaíodh sé bláthanna di uair sa tseachtain. 'He would buy flowers for her once a week.'

This usage of *would* in English must not be confused with the conditional *would*, used for hypothetical situations. The two usages require different forms in Irish.

N would (always) X(Irish past habitual)   *N would X (if Y)*   (Irish conditional)

English use of both *used to* and *would* in the habitual sense is less common, however, than the past habitual forms of Irish, because when the meaning is clear from context, no differentiation of form is necessary in English.

Ghlan sí an teach inné.	'She cleaned the house yesterday.'
Ghlan sí é trí uaire i mbliana.	'She cleaned it three times this year.'

Ghlanadh sí é gach seachtain nuair a bhí sé nua.
'She cleaned it every week when it was new.'

That is, English does not require a distinction of form to separate simple and habitual past meanings; Irish, however, does.

9.1.1.4 Future tense

The future tense endings are *-fidh* or *-faidh* in the first conjugation and *-óidh* or *-eoidh* in the second. Examples include the following.

First-conjugation:	**dúnfaidh sé, glanfaidh sé, scríobhfaidh sé, brisfidh sí, léifidh sí, rithfidh sí, tuigfaidh sé**
Second-conjugation:	**ceannóidh sé, socróidh sí, labhróidh sé, imeoidh sí, éireoidh sí, imreoidh sí**

It is worth noting that the *f* of the first-conjugation future suffix is rarely pronounced, although it may cause devoicing of certain consonants that precede it, so that, for example, *tuigfidh sé* is pronounced /tik'əs'e:/. Other consonants affected similarly include *b, bh/mh, d,* which become/p, f, t/, respectively, in pronunciation but not spelling (e.g., *lúbfaidh sé* /lu:pəs'e:/, *goidfidh sé* /git'əs'e:/, *snámhfaidh sé* /sna:fəs'e:/).

Future-tense forms in the first-person plural are common in colloquial Irish to convey the meaning 'let's…', although standard imperative forms ending in -*mis* also exist and are preferred in some dialects (see Chapters 11 and 15).

Ólfaidh muid deoch.	'Let's have a drink.'
Ólaimis deoch.	
Déanfaidh muid é.	'Let's do it.'
Déanaimis é.	

9.1.2 Conditional mood

Conditional forms combine elements of the preceding two tenses. Although technically a mood (which will be discussed further in Chapter 15), it can express time reference in some instances (cf. Chapter 23). For this reason and because it is formed so similarly to the tenses above, its formation is introduced here.

Like the future-tense forms, conditional suffixes begin with *f* or *ó*, according to the conjugation, but the rest of the endings match those of the past-habitual, i.e., -*(e)adh* or -*eodh/ódh* in the third person, as does initial-consonant lenition.

First-conjugation:	**dhúnfadh sí, ghlanfadh sí, léifeadh sí, rithfeadh sé, bhrisfeadh sé, d'fhanfadh sé, d'ólfadh sé**
Second-conjugation:	**shocródh sé, cheannódh sí, d'éireodh sí, d'imreodh sí, d'fhoghlaimeodh sé**

Regular verbal particles, *go, nach*, etc., are used with conditional verb forms rather than the past-tense particles (those ending in *r*), with the appropriate mutations replacing the lenition found in declarative conditionals.

D'fhanfadh sí.	'She would wait.'
Ní fhanfadh sí.	'She would not wait.'
An bhfanfadh sí?	'Would she wait?'
Nach bhfanfadh sí?	'Wouldn't she wait?'
Deir sí go bhfanfadh sí.	'She says she would wait.'
Deir sí nach bhfanfadh sí.	'She says she wouldn't wait.'

The functions and uses of conditional forms will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 25.

Additional features of regular conjugations

In the first conjugation when *igh* is dropped, the vowel *i* becomes long

(í). Note that the vowel of present-tense and past-habitual endings in this case becomes *o* rather than *a*, making it resemble the second conjugation. However, in the future and conditional, it follows the patterns of the first conjugation:

Nigh	'wash'	**Nígí é!**	'Wash it!'
Níonn sí é.	'She washes it.'		
Níodh sí é.	'She used to wash it.'		
Nífidh sí é.	'She will wash it.'		
Nífeadh sí é.	'She would wash it.'		

A few first-conjugation verbs are disyllabic. Most of these are loanwords formed with the suffix *-áil*, although a few others also exist. These verbs (and occasional one-syllable verbs as well) broaden the last consonant before a suffix (spelled by dropping the preceding *i*).

sábháil:	**Sábhálaigí mé!**	'Save me!'
péinteáil:	**Péinteálann sé.**	'He paints.'
taispeáin:	**Taispeánfaidh sí é.**	'She will show it.'
siúil:	**Siúlann sí.**	'She walks.'

Some exceptions retain the slender consonant when endings are added; the most common such verb is *(t)iomáin* 'drive': *tiomáinigí/ tiomáineann*, etc. Others include *coisric* 'consecrate' and *toirmisc*'prevent, prohibit.'

When a slender vowel is dropped from the second syllable in the second conjugation, bringing together a slender consonant with a preceding broad one, the slender consonant is likewise broadened.

Oscail–'open'	**D'oscail sé an doras.**	'He opened the door.'
Osclaíonn sé é.	'He opens it.'	
D'osclaíodh sé é.	'He used to open it.'	
Osclóidh sé é.	'He will open it.	
D'osclódh sé é.	'He would open it.'	

Irregular verbs

There are 11 Irish verbs that are irregular in the ways their tenses are formed; as is common across languages, these are among the most frequently used verbs in the language, namely the verbs translated as *be, carry/bear/catch, come, do, eat, get, go, give, hear, say*, and *see.*

Irregularities can be of three kinds.

- Certain tenses may use stems different from the imperative stem that is the basis of regular tense formation.
- The form used after verbal particles (*ní, an, go, nach*), known as the *dependent* form, may differ from the form for simple statements.
- There may be irregularities in the pattern of mutation after verbal particles.

In some verbs all these irregularities may be found; others show only a few irregular forms. We will start with the least irregular verbs below, continuing to the more complex. In regularly formed tenses, most verbs follow the patterns of the first conjugation, as described in Chapter 9, unless otherwise noted. Imperative forms and the stems to which tense suffixes are added head each column in the tables below. For most irregular verbs, imperative stems match the present stems, and imperative plurals are formed regularly from singular forms, unless otherwise noted. In addition, however irregular a stem may be with respect to other tenses, the habitual tenses (present and past) always share the same stem form, as do future and conditional forms.

Irregular forms presented below include both Standard CO forms and some of the most common variants encountered. However, irregularities can be quite fluid, and other variants may be heard in certain regions. It is worthwhile for learners interested in the speech of a particular Gaeltacht to listen carefully for alternate forms that may not be presented here.

Ith 'eat'

The verb *to eat* is fully regular except in the future and conditional; these are formed from the irregular stem *íos-*.

Íosfaidh sibh anseo.	'You will eat here.'
D'íosfadh sí rud ar bith.	'She would eat anything.'

In some dialects of Connacht and Munster, this irregular stem is spreading to the present tense as well, so that forms such as *ní íosann sí feoil*–'she doesn't eat meat' may be heard alongside the historical and standard *ní itheann sí feoil.*

Ith, pl. ithigí 'eat'	
Present and past habitual:	**ith-**
Past:	**(d')ith**
Future and conditional:	**íos-**

Clois/cluin 'hear'

The verb *to hear* has two distinct imperative stems, *cluin* and *clois*, both accepted as standard by the Caighdeán Oifigiúil. This gives as standard tensed forms both *cluineann* and *cloiseann* 'hears'; *cluinfidh* and *cloisfidh* 'will hear,' etc. The choice of *cluin* or *clois* is regional, *cluin* being generally heard most in north Connacht and Ulster, *clois* elsewhere. The chosen stem conjugates regularly in all tenses except the past tense, which uses the irregular stem *cuala*, always lenited in statements as *chuala*, for both verbs. Verbal particles also show some anomalies in the past tense (see Section 10.9.2). Statements are negated with the regular past particle *níor*, but questions and subordinate clauses may be formed either with the regular past-tense particles ending in *r* (the standard usage) or with the general verbal particles and eclipsis (in Ulster, and as a common colloquial alternative in Connacht).

Clois, cluin, pl. cloisigí, cluinigí 'hear'	
Present and past habitual:	**clois-, cluin-**
Past:	**chuala**
Future and conditional:	**clois-, cluin-**

Chuala sí an scéal.	'She heard the news.'
Níor chuala sé rud ar bith.	'He didn't hear anything.'
Ar chuala/an gcuala sé an scéal?	'Did you hear the news?'
Sílim gur chuala/go gcuala sé é.	'I think that he heard it.'
Nár chuala/Nach gcuala sibh é?	'Didn't you hear it?'

Déan 'do' and *feic* 'see'

Similarly, the standard forms of these verbs have an irregular stem only in the simple past tense. Otherwise, they are formed like regular first-conjugation verbs, with suffixes added to the imperative stems given above (but with notable differences of pronunciation across dialects). Additionally, each has an irregular dependent form (shown in parentheses below), used with the regular (non-past) verbal particles for questions, negation, and complement clauses.

The past-tense stems are following in the following table.

	Déan, pl. déanaigí 'do'	*Feic, pl. feicigí 'see'*
Present and past habitual:	déan-	feic-
Past:	rinne (dearna)	chonaic (faca)
Future and conditional:	déan-	feic-

Since *dearna* and *faca* always follow verbal particles, they always appear with either lenition or eclipsis, depending on the particle. The general particles rather than the regular past-tense particles in *r* are used; thus the stems are lenited after *ní* and eclipsed after other particles exactly as in non-past tenses of regular verbs.

Déan: Rinne Áine an obair.   'Áine did the work.'
Ní dhearna Caitlín í.   'Caitlín didn't do it.'
An ndearna tú é sin?   'Did you do that?'
Deir sé go ndearna sé é.   'He says he did it.'
Sílim nach ndearna sé é.   'I think that he didn't do it.'

Feic: Chonaic Siobhán mé.   'Siobhán saw me.'
Ní fhaca Pól mé.   'Pól didn't see me.'
An bhfaca sibh mé?   'Did you see me?'
Deir sé nach bhfaca sé mé.   'He says he didn't see me.'
Sílim go bhfaca sé mé.   'I think that he saw me.'

In some dialects, e.g., Connemara, use of dependent past forms of *déan* is waning, so that *ní rinne*, *an rinne*, etc. are also sometimes heard colloquially. In Munster, the entire past tense has been regularized to *(do) dhein*, which is also the Munster present stem.

Tabhair 'give, take'

This verb divides its tenses evenly between two stems. The imperative singular *tabhair* forms the basis, with broadened final *r* (*tabhar-*), for future and conditional endings; *tug*, the imperative plural stem, is also the stem for present and both past tenses.

Tabhair, pl. tugaigí 'give, take'

Present and past habitual:	tug-
Past:	thug
Future and conditional:	tabhar-

Tabhair dom é!	'Give it to me!' (to one person)
Tugaigí dom é!	'Give it to me!' (to more than one person)
Tugann sí dá cara é.	'She gives it to her friend.'
Thug sí dá cara é.	'She gave it to her friend.'
Thugadh sí dá cara é.	'She used to give it to her friend.'
Tabharfaidh sí dom é.	'She will give it to me.'
Thabharfadh sí dom é.	'She would give it to me.'

Note that the broadening of /r′/ in the future and conditional forms of *tabhair* is in accordance with the rule given in Chapter 9 for disyllabic verbs of the first conjugation.

Tar 'come'

The verb *to come* uses separate stem forms for the habitual, past, and future/conditional tenses, and the singular imperative stem is distinct as well. Here and elsewhere, when the simple past uses an irregular stem, the past habitual takes the same stem as the present; i.e., the habitual tenses pattern together.

Tar, pl. tagaigí 'come'	
Present and past habitual:	tag-
Past:	tháinig
Future and conditional:	tioc-

Tagaim anseo go minic.	'I come here often.'
Thagadh Máirín go minic.	'Máirín came often.'
An dtagann tú anseo go minic?	'Do you come here often?'
Tháinig Mícheál inné.	'Mícheál came yesterday.'
Tiocfaidh sí amárach.	'She will come tomorrow.'
Ní thiocfaidh Mairéad.	'Mairéad won't come.'
Thiocfadh sibh, nach dtiocfadh?	'You'd come, wouldn't you?'
Tar isteach!	'Come in! (to one person)'

Despite the irregular stem form, the regular past particles *ar, níor, nár, gur* are used to introduce *tháinig* in the standard forms (though not in all dialects).

Níor tháinig tú.	'You didn't come.'
Ar tháinig tú?	'Did you come?'
Sílim gur tháinig siad.	'I think they came.'

Abair 'say' and *beir* 'carry, bear, catch'

The verbs *abair* and *beir* also use three separate stems and are conjugated similarly (the imperative is also distinct in the case of *abair*).

	Abair, pl. abraigí 'say'	Beir, pl. beirigí 'bear, carry, catch'
Present and past habitual:	**deir**	~~**beir-**~~
Past:	**dúirt**	**rug**
Future and conditional:	**déar-**	**béar-**

Abair: **Deir siad go bhfuil siad sásta.**	'They say that they are pleased.'
Deireadh sí…	'She used to say…'
Dúirt tú…	'You said…'
Déarfaidh sí…	'She will say…'
Deireadh sí…	'She used to say…'
Déarfadh sibh…	'You would say…'

Note the absence of lenition in the conditional and past tenses of *abair*. (The use of preverbal particles with *abair* is discussed in Section 10.9.2.)

It is also usual, in both the standard and the spoken dialects, to omit the present-tense suffix *-eann*, using simply the bare stem *deir* before noun and pronoun subjects (although the suffix is used optionally in Munster). The first-person forms *deirim* and *deirimid* are, however, found in the CO and in Munster.

Beir:	**Beireann siad**	'They carry'
Bheireadh sí.	'She used to carry.'	
Rug sé.	'He carried.'	
Béarfaidh sí.	'I will carry.'	
Bhéarfadh sé.	'He would carry.'	

Beir uses the regular preverbal particles, including those ending with -*r* in the past tense. The following examples also illustrate some idiomatic uses of this verb.

Níor rug sí páiste riamh.	'She never had (bore) a child.'
Ar rug siad bua?	'Did they win?'
Ní bheireann an chearc úd.	'That hen doesn't lay.'
Nach mbeireann an chearc?	'Doesn't the hen lay?'
An mbéarfaidh sí amárach?	'Will she give birth tomorrow?'
Ní bhéarfaidh siad air.	'They won't catch him.'
Sílim go mbéarfadh sibhse air.	'I think *you* would catch him.'

Faigh 'get' and *téigh* 'go'

These verbs also base their tense formation on three separate stems; additionally, some tenses have different dependent and independent stem forms. The forms in parentheses below are the dependent forms,

used only following the negative, question, and subordination particles (complementizers) in the future tense of *faigh* and the past tense of *téigh.*

	Faigh/faighigí 'get, find'	Téigh/téigí 'go'
Present and past habitual:	faigh-	té-
Past:	fuair	chuaigh (deachaigh)
Future and conditional:	gheobh- (faigh-)	rach-

Regular endings are added to these stems, except that for these two verbs the future endings are simply *-(a)idh,* without the *f* or *ó* characteristic of regular future forms.

Faigh: Faighim feoil ansin.	'I get meat there.'
Faigheann sí feoil ansin.	'She gets meat there.'
Fuaireamar/fuair muid feoil ansin.	'We got meat there.'
Gheobhaidh tú feoil ansin.	'You'll get meat there.'

The future is unlenited in Munster: *geobhaidh.*

Téigh: Téim go Gaillimh go minic	'I go to Galway often.'
Téann siad go Gaillimh go minic.	'They go to Galway often.'
Chuaigh Pádraig go Gaillimh.	'Pádraig went to Galway.'
Chuamar/chuaigh muid go Gaillimh.	'We went to Galway.
Rachaidh mé go Gaillimh.	'I will go to Galway.'

Dependent forms of these verbs show further irregularities. The present dependent forms of *faigh* are regular, with the usual mutations after particles.

Ní fhaigheann siad feoil.	'They don't get meat.'
An bhfaigheann sibh feoil?	'Do you get meat?'
Sílim go bhfaigheann sí feoil ansin.	'I think she gets meat there.'
Nach bhfaigheann sí feoil?	'Doesn't she get meat?'

Dependent past forms of *fuair* don't change, but follow the non-past particles *ní, an, go, nach;* the mutation of *fuair* that occurs with them is always eclipsis, even after *ní.* The future dependent forms change the stem to *faigh-,* also with eclipsis everywhere, and the future ending *-idh,* conditional *-eadh.* Although the spelling of the dependent future and conditional is the same as that of the present stem, the pronunciation is different in some dialects. (In Connemara and Donegal, for example, the present stem is pronounced /faː/, but the future is /wiː/. In West Kerry, on the other hand, the vowel is pronounced as /ai/ throughout the paradigm.)

Ní bhfuair mé é.	'I didn't get it.'
An bhfuair tú é?	'Did you get it?'
Sílim go bhfuair sé é.	'I think he got it.'
Ní bhfaighidh tú é.	'You won't get it.'

An bhfaighidh sí é?	'Will she get it?
Sílim nach bhfaighidh sibh é	'I think you won't get it.'

The irregular dependent past form of *téigh* also uses the regular non-past particles, with the usual mutations (cf. Chapter 6); thus, the dependent stem *deachaigh* lenites after *ní* and is eclipsed otherwise.

Ní dheachaigh Síle…	'Síle didn't go…'
An ndeachaigh tú…?	'Did you go…?'
Nach ndeachaigh siad…?	'Didn't they go…?'
Sílim go ndeachaigh sé…	'I think that he went…'

With the habitual and future stems, dependent forms of *téigh* do not change the stem; mutations are regular.

Ní théim…	'I don't go…'
An dtéann tú…?	'Do you go…?'
An rachaidh tú…?	'Will you go…?'
Sílim go rachaidh mé…	'I think that I'll go…'

Bí 'be'

Another highly irregular verb, *bí* 'be' was introduced in Chapter 7 (Section 7.2.1), where the present, past, and future forms were given. They are summarized here, before introducing the other tenses.

Present:	**tá** (neg. **níl**, Q **bhfuil**)
past:	**bhí** (neg. and Q **raibh**)
Future:	**beidh** (neg. and Q same, with regular mutations)

As noted in Chapter 7, the simple present form *tá* coexists with a present habitual form used for regular or recurring states; it is similar in form to the present tense of regular second-conjugation verbs, which also have a habitual interpretation in most cases. The present habitual of *bí* is formed regularly on the imperative stem form, with second-conjugation endings: *bíonn* (first-person *bím*, *bímid*). Negative, question, and complement forms follow the patterns of mutation for regular verbs.

The past habitual form of *bí* is also formed regularly from the simple past stem, with mutations for questions, negatives, and complementizers operating regularly: *bhíodh* (*ní bhíodh*, *an mbíodh*, etc.) Personal endings are used as with the regular verbs (*bhínn*, *bhíteá*, *bhímis*, *bhídís*; see Chapter 11).

The stem for the conditional of *bí*, as for regular verbs, is based on the future plus lenition (*bhe-*), with regular first-conjugation endings and

mutations. The form unmarked for person is *bheadh*. Personal forms are *bheinn*, *bheifeá*, *bheimis*, *bheidís* (see Chapter 11 for more on personal forms).

Dialect variants

In addition to the occasional regularizations of certain dependent forms mentioned above for particular verbs, some dialects have more complex patterns that draw on older stem variations now lost in the CO and dialects on which it was based. These can be grouped into further stem irregularities, and irregularities of mutation.

10.9.1 Variant stem forms

Further distinctions in independent and post-particle forms of verbs were found universally in older forms of the language, and some of these have carried over into some modern dialects. The forms given above for the CO are also found in at least one other dialect. However, considerable stem variation can be found in other regions; a few of the most salient examples are outlined below.

An irregular dependent form of *abair*, based on the imperative, can be found in parts of Connacht (C) and Ulster (U), where it may alternate with *deir*. *Abr-* takes second-conjugation endings with long vowels as a rule, but short (first-conjugation) forms are used in the present tense in Ulster. *Abr-* can form the dependent stem in all tenses except the simple past.

Ní abraíonn (C)/**abrann** (U) **siad**	'They don't say'
go n-abróidh sí... (C)	'that she will say...'

This form is sometimes found as an independent stem as well.

Abraím	'I say'

Conversely, Ulster has retained older independent forms in the present tense of several irregular verbs, specifically *déan*, *faigh*, *feic*, *téigh*, and *tar*. In most of these, the forms introduced in earlier sections resurface after the preverbal particles (*ní* serves here as an example). The same absence of *-ann* noted above for *deir* is observed in several of these forms.

(Gh)níonn siad	'they make/do'	**Ní dhéanann siad**	'they don't make/do'
Gheibh siad	'they get'	**Ní fhaigheann siad**	'they don't get'
Tchí/tíonn siad	'they see'	**Ní fheiceann siad**	'they don't see'

théid siad	'they go'	**Ní théann siad**	'they don't go'
T(h)ig siad	'they come'	**Ní thig siad**	'they don't come'

The case of *tar* 'come' differs slightly in that the same form is used in independent declarative clauses and after preverbal particles.

Most of these independent stems are limited to Ulster dialects. However, the independent form of *feic* 'see' is also found in Munster, where it is written *cí*.

Cíonn sé	'he sees'
Ní fheiceann sí	'she doesn't see'

The stem *cí* is used as the independent stem in all tenses except the past in both Munster and Ulster. The remaining forms above are limited to the present and past habitual tenses.

Ulster Irish also retains its own independent present and future/conditional stems for the verb *tabhair* 'give, bring,' shown in the following examples. The third-person suffix is lost in the independent present-tense form, analogous to *deir* above. The similarity to the separate verb *beir* 'bear' may be due to historical merger of the two verbs, but note the mutation in independent forms, which keeps the two verbs distinct.

Bheirim/bheir sé	'I give/he gives'	**Ní thugaim/thugann sé**	'I don't/he doesn't give'
Bhéarfaidh sí	'she will give'	**Ní thabharfaidh sí**	'she won't give'

In Connacht, the standard forms of *téigh* alternate frequently with a separate verb stem *gabh*, especially in the future and condtional, but also occasionally in the habitual tenses: *gabhfaidh muid*, *ghabhfá*, *gabhaim*, etc.

10.9.2 Mutation patterns

To review the normal patterns of mutation after preverbal particles, regular verbs undergo lenition after *ní* in most tenses, and eclipsis after *an, go, nach*. In the regular past tense, however, the particles change to forms ending in *-r* (cf. Chapters 6, 9), and lenition is the rule after all such particles.

Irregular verbs differ in that many of them use the non-past particles with their associated mutations when the past-tense forms themselves have irregular dependent stems. Thus, the past forms of *bí* are independent *bhí*, but with particles *ní raibh, an raibh, go raibh, nach raibh* (introduced in Chapter 7). Others that behave according to this

pattern are *feic*, *déan*, and *téigh*.

Statement	Negative	Question
~~chonaic~~'saw'	~~ní fhaca~~	~~an bhfaca?~~
rinne'did'	**ní dhearna**	**an ndearna?**
chuaigh'went'	**ní dheachaigh**	**an ndeachaigh?**

However, since Munster Irish has regularized the past forms of *déan* (to *dhein*) and *téigh* (to *chuaigh*), those are treated as regular forms, using *níor*, *ar,* etc.

Those otherwise irregular verbs with past dependent forms that are the same as their independent forms (without particles) use the particles typical of regular verbs. These include *beir* in all dialects, the Munster forms of *déan* and *téigh*, and the standard forms of *clois/cluin*, *tabhair*, and *tar*.

Statement	Negative	Question
~~rug~~'bore'	~~níor rug~~	~~ar rug?~~
chuaigh'went'	**níor chuaigh (M)**	**ar chuaigh (M)**
dhein'did' (M)	**ní(or) dhein (M)**	**ar dhein? (M)**
chuala'heard'	**níor chuala**	**ar chuala**
thug	**níor thug**	**ar thug?**

With regard to the last three verbs above, Munster Irish follows the standard in using the *-r* forms for the past tense, and these are found in other dialects as well. However, in Connacht and Ulster, the general forms **an, nach, go** are common spoken alternatives, with eclipsis replacing lenition, **an dtáinig, go dtug, nach gcuala**, etc. The negative particle in Connacht is still usually **níor** with these verbs, but in Ulster Irish **ní** is found.

The irregularities in mutation of *faigh* are more limited. The lack of lenition in Munster of standard *gheobhaidh*–'will get' was mentioned above. In addition, in all dialects, the past form *fuair* is always eclipsed after all particles, even the negative *ní*.

Ní bhfuair siad	'they didn't get'
An bhfuair siad?	'did they get?'
Nach bhfuair siad?	'didn't they get?' etc.

Finally, *deir* also takes regular particles (without *-r*) in the CO and Munster, but the regular ones with *-r* in Connacht and Ulster, where the initial consonant disappears altogether in leniting contexts.

Ní 'eir(eann) sí focal.	'She doesn't say a word.'
Ní 'eireadh sí focal.	'She didn't (habitually) say a word.'
Níor 'úirt sé é sin.	'He didn't say that.'
Ar 'úirt tú é?	'Did you say it?'
… gur 'úradar	'… that they said…'

Ní 'éarfaidh sí tada.	'She won't say anything.'
An ndéarfaidh tú rud léi?	'Will you say something to her?
Deir sí go ndeir sé…	'She says that he says…'
Nach ndúirt tú é sin?	'Didn't you say that?'

In the other dialects, forms beginning with *d* are never lenited, although eclipsis is found regularly: *ní dúirt, ní déarfainn*, etc., but *an ndúirt, an ndéarfá*, etc.

The above sections by no means exhaust the considerable dialect variation found among irregular verbs. Hughes (2008) provides useful paradigms for over 100 verbs, including all irregular ones, for each of the major dialects including the Caighdeán Oifigiúil. Other dialect monographs also provide details (sometimes differing in particular regions of a province). Among these may be mentioned de Bhaldraithe (1953), Mhac an Fhalaigh (1968), Ó Baoill (1996), Ó Sé (1995, 2000), and Wagner (1979).

Chapter 11

Personal endings

All Irish verbs are marked for tense (or mood, to be discussed further in Chapter 15), but vary as to whether a pronominal subject is marked with a suffix added to the tense marker (called *synthetic forms*), or by the default tense and a separate pronoun (*analytic forms*). Usage ranges widely across and within dialects. The full range of synthetic subject paradigms is given in this chapter, followed by discussion of their distribution.

Inflected forms

Most of the personal endings given in the following tables are not used in all dialects. Only in Munster is the full range of personal endings found in preference to separate pronoun subjects. In the Standard and in dialects north of the Shannon, only some of these endings are routinely used, sometimes only in restricted contexts, and there is considerable variation. The paradigms below show all personal endings that survive in the modern language in at least one dialect. Those found as the norm in the CO are presented in bold font. Forms that have no person suffix but always take a separate pronoun subject in all dialects are italicized. Examples are given with both broad and slender verb stems. The other patterns described in Chapter 9.2 (loss of *-igh*, loss of unstressed vowel, consonant broadening) are also routinely observed in all persons, as for the third-person forms provided there.

11.1.1 First-conjugation: díol 'sell,' tuig 'understand'

When the stem of a verb ends in *t* or *th*, this is deleted or merged with a *t* in endings such as the second person of the past habitual: *thiteá* 'you used to fall,' *chaiteá* 'you used to throw,' *riteá* 'you used to run'

(from stems *thit, caith, rith*, respectively).

Munster forms differ from those of the Caighdeán shown in bold in the table above in certain respects. First, the past tenses (simple and habitual) are often preceded by the optional particle *do* in affirmative statements: *do dhíol sé*, and the *d'* that in other dialects precedes a vowel (and *fh*) in the conditional and past forms becomes *dh'* in Munster. Additionally, the first-person plural past form may be pronounced with a slender *r*: *(do) dhíolamair*, The first-person plural of the present tense has a long vowel in the suffix instead of the short one of the CO: *díolaimíd*, and both the standard first-person plural suffix *-mis* and the third-person plural *-dís* of the conditional and past habitual forms are often pronounced as *-míst, -díst*. These variants are also found with verbs of the second-conjugation class, illustrated in the next section, and with irregular verbs.

11.1.2 Second-conjugation: ceannaigh–'buy', éirigh–'rise'

Ulster suffixes in this class differ from those of the other dialects and the Standard (shown above) in that the vowel of the present tense is short in Ulster Irish: *ceannaim, ceannann tú, éirim, éireann tú*, etc. The Ulster future and conditional forms replace *-óidh/ódh* with *-óchaidh/ óchadh* (except in the 2 sg.), plus any personal endings used (generally only the first-person conditional endings are used in Ulster).

1.1.3 Use of suffixes

As noted earlier, third-person singular forms always use separate pronoun (or noun) subjects. Summarizing from the paradigms, it can be observed that second-person singular forms also lack personal endings in the present tense, as do the second-person plural in all tenses except the past. The Caighdeán Oifigiúil is richest in synthetic forms in the past-habitual and conditional paradigms, where all the personal endings shown above are standard. However, these are frequently omitted by Connacht and Ulster speakers in favor of analytic forms with separate pronouns, especially in the plural forms. In contrast, many Munster speakers freely use all the endings shown above, although some have adopted analytic Caighdeán forms as well in certain tenses.

In the Irish of Connacht and Ulster, the first-person plural suffix of all tenses is usually replaced by the regular tense-only suffix and a separate pronoun, usually *muid* (a few regions may still use an older

pronoun *sinn*).

glanann muid	'we clean'
feicfidh muid	'we will see'
nígh muid	'we washed'
cheannódh muid	'we would buy'
imreoidh muid	'we will play'
éiríonn muid	'we rise'
labhair muid	'we spoke'

In Connacht, other personal endings (especially first- and second-person singular) may also be used in responses and tags, but are rare in independent statements.

> **An bhfaca tú Síle?**
> **–Ní fhacas**
> 'Did you see Síle?'   'No.' (lit. 'I didn't see.')
> **Chonaic tú Gearóid, nach bhfacais?**
> 'You saw Gearóid, didn't you?'
> **Scríobh chugam!**
> **–Scríobhfad.**
> 'Write to me.' –'I will.'
> **Ith na fataí!**
> **–Ní íosfad.**
> 'Eat the potatoes.' 'No, I won't.'

The only endings routinely used in independent statements in Connacht are the standard forms for the first-person singular present tense and first- and second-person singular conditional. The third-person plural endings are also sometimes used in past and conditional forms as alternatives to tense marker + *siad*. The third-person plural of the past tense is in fact fairly common in Connacht. In Ulster, personal endings are even less commonly used, being limited primarily to first-person present tense forms, and a separate pronoun is always possible even there.

Pronunciation patterns

Even where all dialects use the same tense and person suffixes, the pronunciation can vary dramatically from region to region. The future-tense ending *-f(a)idh/óidh* is pronounced differently in all three provinces, as the examples of *díol/ceannaigh* below illustrate (the spellings below are intended to reflect pronunciations and are not normally used in standard written Irish). In addition, the Ulster form

of the future is different for second-conjugation verbs, in that the ending has an extra syllable.

	Munster	Connacht	Ulster
'will sell'	díolfig	díol(f)a	díolfi
'will buy'	ceannóig	ceannó	ceannóchai

These forms are used when the verb ends a phrase or is followed by a noun. When followed by a pronoun, all endings are pronounced as indicated above for Connacht, with the reduced vowel schwa (here spelt as *a*) in the first conjugation and *ó* in the second; Ulster retains its two-syllable form in the second conjugation, but reduces the vowel to schwa: *ceannócha*.

The consonant of the suffix -*adh/ódh*, found as part of conditional suffixes as well as in the past impersonal (see Chapter 12) and some verbal nouns (see Chapters 13–14), also varies in pronunciation, depending on both region and meaning. The table below shows ad-hoc spellings for first-conjugation verbs to reflect the pronunciations more directly. For second-conjugation verbs, only the vowel is different (*ó*).

	Munster	Connacht	Ulster
past impersonal	-ach	-ú	-ú/as/ús
conditional	-ach	-ach	-ú
verbal noun	-a	-a	-ú

Additionally, in Connacht and Ulster, the pronunciation of this suffix changes to -*ait/ət'/* before the pronouns *sé, sí, siad, sibh*.

The present-tense singular form may have a broad *m* in some parts of Ulster: *tuigeam* 'I understand.' The plural may be pronounced as in the Standard: -*mid* or with a broad *m* and short vowel: -*maid*, very close to the independent pronoun *muid*, which is also common. In parts of Ulster (and occasionally parts of Connacht as well) the long vowel of second-conjugation verbs is shortened, e.g., from *ceannaíonn* to a pronunciation more like *ceannann*.

A number of Munster pronunciations also stand out from the other dialects. The most important of these are listed below.

- Pronunciation of -*igh/idh* as if spelled *ig* except before pronouns.

Ceannaig é! 'Buy it!'
An ndíola sé é? **–Díolaig.** 'Will he buy it? –Yes.'

More general than the future/conditional forms mentioned above, this pronunciation can be found in all tenses (e.g., *chuaigh* 'went,'

pronounced as if written *chuaig*), and even in nouns (e.g., *aghaidh* 'face,' pronounced as if written *aghaig*).

- Pronunciation of the *f* in second-person conditional forms:

Cheannófá é.   'You would buy it.'
Chuirfeá...   'You would put...'

- Pronunciation of the future/conditional *f* following a vowel:

Léifidh sé   'He will read'

In other dialects, the *f* of the future and conditional suffixes is pronounced as *h* or is silent. When unpronounced, it tends to change the pronunciation of certain consonants. Specifically, /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/ become /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/; thus, *pógfaid* 'will kiss' is pronounced as if *póca*, *snámhfaidh* 'will swim' as if *snáfa*, *goidfidh* 'will steal' as if *goite*, and so on.

Chapter 12

Impersonal forms

One last set of suffixes, found across all dialects, is used for the various tenses of what is traditionally known as the *autonomous verb* or *briathar saor*. This is an impersonal form, used when the subject of a verb is unknown or unimportant, or when the speaker simply does not wish to specify who performed or experienced the event expressed by the verb. The unspecified subject can be translated into English as *one* or *someone* or *they*, used with a non-specific reference, or by a passive form if the verb is transitive. The suffixes are added to the stem of the verb in place of the personal endings described in the last chapter. Table 12.1 shows the impersonal forms of regular verbs.

Table 12.1 Regular impersonal forms

First-conjugation: *díol*–'sell,' *tuig*–'understand'		
Present	**díoltar**	**tuigtear**
Past	**díoladh**	**tuigeadh**
Future	**díolfar**	**tuigfear**
Past habitual	**dhíoltaí**	**thuigtí**
Conditional	**dhíolfaí**	**thuigfí**
Second-conjugation: *ceannaigh*–'buy,' *éirigh*–'rise'		
Present	**ceannaítear**	**éirítear**
Past	**ceannaíodh**	**éiríodh**
Future	**ceannófar**	**éireofar**
Past habitual	**cheannaítí**	**d'éirítí**
Conditional	**cheannófaí**	**d'éireofaí**

Note that in the simple past tense, the initial consonant of impersonal forms is not lenited, nor is *d'* prefixed to an initial vowel, although lenition and the *d'* are both found in the past habitual and conditional forms. Spoken dialects usually prefix an *h* to vowels in the past impersonal (and sometimes on other forms where a consonant would be lenited), e.g., *héiríodh* 'one rose,' but this is not mentioned in the CO, nor is it applied universally.

As was seen for the personal past habitual forms introduced in Chapter 11, when the stem of a verb ends in *t* or *th*, this is deleted or

merged with a *t* in impersonal endings such as the present and past-habitual: *titear* 'one falls,' *caitear* 'one throws,' *rití* 'one used to run.'

Irregular verbs

For most irregular verb forms, the regular first-conjugation impersonal endings given above are added to the appropriate tensed stem for each verb, as in Table 12.2.

Table 12.2 Regular impersonal forms of irregular verbs

	Personal	Impersonal	
see	feiceann sí	feictear	'one sees'
bear	rug sí	rugadh	'one bore'
give	tabharfaidh sé	tabharfar	'one will give'
hear	cloisfidh sé	cloisfear	'one will hear'

Other verbs, however, are irregular in the impersonal form itself.

12.1.1 Irregular impersonal forms

The verb *bí* has three irregular impersonal forms, in the present independent, and past (both independent and dependent forms).

Present: **tá mé** 'I am'
         táthar 'one is'
Past: **bhí mé** 'I was'
         bhíothas 'one was'
       ní raibh mé 'I was not'
         ní rabhthas 'one was not'

Several other verbs have an impersonal past formed similarly in the CO.

chuala sí 'she heard'
    chualathas 'one heard'
fuair tú 'you got'
    fuarthas 'one got'
  chonaic mé 'I saw'
    chonacthas 'one saw'
chuaigh sé 'he went'
    chuathas 'one went'
ní dheachaidh mé 'I didn't go'
     ní dheachthas 'one didn't go'

tháinig sé 'he came'
    thangthas 'one came'

Dependent forms use the same particles as the dependent personal forms presented in Chapter 10. That is, *clois/cluin* 'hear' and *tar* 'come' take the regular past particles in *r* (*níor, ar, gur, nár*), whereas *faigh* 'get,' *feic* 'see,' and *téigh* 'go' take the non-past forms with lenition only after *ní*, and eclipsis after the rest. Examples can be found in the next section.

The slender vowels of the personal forms *fuair*, *chonaic*, and *tháinig* become broad in the impersonal forms. The second-syllable vowel of the personal form of *tháinig* has also been omitted (a regular process seen before in other personal verb forms).

The past impersonal form of *abair* 'say' shows different irregularities. The ending is that of the regular past impersonal, but the final consonant *t* of the personal past stem is dropped and the remaining consonant (*r*) is broad rather than slender.

dúirt mé 'I said'
    dúradh 'one said'

Finally, the impersonal future and conditional forms of *téigh* 'go' are irregular, in that they include the *f* typical of regular verbs in these tenses, although it is not found in the personal future/conditional forms of this verb (except in the second-person conditional ending *rachfá* 'you would go').

rachaidh sí ' 'she will go'
  rachfar 'one will go'
rachadh sé 'he would go'
  rachfaí 'one would go'

Standard impersonal forms of all other irregular verbs are formed predictably from the tense stems of Chapter 10 and the impersonal endings presented here.

12.1.2 Dialect variants

Impersonal forms vary considerably across dialects, both in the independent forms and in dependent forms following particles. The principal differences are found in the simple past tense, described below; further details can be found in Hughes (2008) or in individual

dialect studies.

All dialects follow the Caighdeán Oifigiúil for the impersonal forms of the verbs *beir*, *ith* (with the potential addition of initial *h*, mentioned above in the spoken forms), and *tabhair*. These are not shown on the table below. The greatest number of non-standard forms is found in Connacht, but Munster and Ulster also show some additional irregularities apart from the patterned idiosyncrasies already mentioned. These are summarized in Table 12.3. Those that match the CO in form are italicized.

Table 12.3 Irregular impersonals: dialect variation

Verb	Connacht	Ulster	Munster	Gloss
abair	húradh	húradh	dúrthas	'one said'
	níor húradh	níor húradh	ní dúrthas	'one didn't say'
bí	bhíothadh	bhíothar	*bhíotha(r)s,*	'one was'
	ní rabhadh	ní rabhthar	*ní rabhtha(r)s*	'one was not'
clois	cloiseadh	chualas/	*chualatha(r)s*	'one heard'
		cluineadh		
déan	*rinneadh*	*rinneadh*	d(h)eineadh	'one did'
faigh	fríothadh	*fuarthas*	(do) fuaireadh	'one got'
	níor fríothadh	*ní bhfuarthas*	ní bhfuaireadh	'one didn't get'
feic	facthas	*chonacthas*	*chonac(a)tha(r)s*	'one saw'
	ní fhacthas	*ní fhacthas*	ní fheacatha(r)s	'one didn't see'
tar	tháinigeadh	*thánagthas*	(do) thánathas	'one came'
téigh	chuadh	*chuathas*	*chuatha(r)s*	'one went'
	ní dheachadh	ní theachas	níor chuatha*(r)s*	'one didn't go'
	an ndeachadh?	an dteachas?	an chuatha(r)s?	'did one go?'

Ulster and Connacht forms of *déan* 'do' are also the same as the CO forms, but Munster has regularized the entire past paradigm to the stem *dhein*, which is also used in the impersonal, with optional lenition: *d(h)eineadh*. Munster forms also match the CO for *bí* 'be,' *clois* 'hear,' *feic* 'see,' and *téigh* 'go,' except that an optional *r* may be added before the final *s*: *bhíothars*, etc., and in the case of *feic*, a syllable is added: *chonacatha(r)s/ní fheacatha(r)s*. Ulster also follows CO forms for impersonal *faigh* 'get,' *feic* 'see,' *tar* 'come,' and *téigh* 'go,' but Connacht dialects use separate forms for all these.

Regarding the past-tense preverbal particles, the Caighdeán prescribes *níor/ar*, etc. preceding dependent forms of *beir*, *clois*, *ith*, *tabhair*, and *tar*, all verbs without a separate dependent past form. The particles *ní/ an*, etc. (with lenition or eclipsis as described in Chapter 6) are used for verbs with a distinct dependent past form: *bí*, *déan*, *feic*, *chuaigh*, as well as for *abair* and *faigh*, which use the same dependent form as the independent past but with mutation irregularities. In most cases the dialects follow the CO in particle usage, with the following exceptions.

Munster's regularized past impersonal *deineadh* uses *níor/ar*, etc. as

past particles, with variation between use of lenited and unlenited verb stem (*níor d(h)eineadh*, etc.). Likewise, *níor/ar*, etc. are used in Munster for the past impersonal of *téigh*. Ulster and Connacht deviate from the CO in two respects: they use the regular past particles *níor/ar*, etc. before their variant forms of *abair*: *ar húradh*, etc., and some dialects also allow *ní/an* as alternate forms (optional, at least in Connacht) of the particles before dependent forms of *clois/cluin* and *tar*: e.g., *ní chualas/cluineadh* (U), *an dtainigeadh* (C). Connacht also uses *níor/ar* before *fríothadh* (without mutation).

Use and translation

In many cases, the impersonal forms of transitive verbs are translated into English as passives.

Díoltar fíon ansin. 'Wine is sold there.'
Díolfar an teach tar éis na sochraide.
   'The house will be sold after the funeral.'
Ceannaíodh i mBeirlín é.   'It was bought in Berlin.'

Such translations are so frequent, in fact, that these forms have sometimes been identified as passive endings. Historically, they arguably were, but in contemporary Irish, they differ in several ways from passive forms of English and many other languages.

First, although in an English passive sentence the grammatical subject acts as such, appearing in initial position and taking nominative case when it is a pronoun (*They were beaten*), this is not true in Irish. In particular, the form that a pronoun takes is the form typical of an object or other non-subject role, (cf.): that is, *iad*, not *siad*, in the first example below, and the object of a preposition (*do* rather than *sé*) in the second.

Buaileadh iad.   'They were beaten.'
Tugadh le fios do Eoin…   'Eoin was given to understand…'

Moreover, the impersonal endings are also found on intransitive verbs, where a passive translation is not available.

Táthar ag magadh fút.   'People are mocking you.'
Caithfear fanacht anseo.   'One/we must wait here.'
Ní bhreathnófaí air cheana.   'No one would have looked at it before.'
Níl inní as a shíltear a bhítear em.'
(Lit. 'it is not as one thinks.')
Tosófar ag imirt ar ball.   'They'll begin playing soon.'

Finally, although the performer of an action expressed by a passive verb in English may be mentioned using a phrase introduced with the preposition *by*, as in *The window was broken by the children*, comparable sentences are not found in contemporary Irish (although they sometimes occurred in earlier forms of the language). Instead, when asked to translate a sentence like this one, speakers tend to use circumlocutions or break it into two sentences. For example:

> **Briseadh an fhuinneog. 'Siad (= is iad) na páistí a rinne é.**
> 'The window was broken. It was the children who did it.'

Idiomatic usage

A number of impersonal structures are commonly used with idiomatic meanings not readily deducible from their literal translations. Some of the most common of these are presented in this section.

1. **Rugadh Órla i Sasana.**   'Órla was born in England.'

This usage is not precisely idiomatic, but a straightforward application of impersonal usage (lit. 'someone bore Órla'). It is actually an exact equivalent of the English, but uses the impersonal ending, which replaces the passive form found in English whenever the subject (here, the bearer, or mother) isn't mentioned. When a pronoun identifies the person born, it usually comes at the end of the sentence, like other non-subject pronouns (see Chapter 5).

Rugadh i Sasana í.	'She was born in England.'
2. **Cailleadh é/í.**	'He/she died.'
Cailleadh a hathair.	'Her father died.'

Although this sentence can also have its literal meaning, 'he/she/it was lost,' by far the most common use of the form is to indicate death, as above.

3. **Casadh fear liom/orm.**   'I met a man.'

The literal translation, 'a man was turned with me/on me,' makes little sense. This is a true idiom. Both *le* and *ar* are used as the preposition carrying the identity of the subject (*I* in the example above).

4. **Feictear dom go bhfuil...**   "It seems to me that... is...'

The literal meaning of this ('one sees to/for me') is slightly more

transparent than the previous example, but is still clearly idiomatic.

Other impersonal structures

Impersonal meaning can also be expressed by various idiomatic structures such as those based on the copula *is* (cf. Section 7.1 in Chapter 7) and certain other verbs. Most co-exist with personal uses that introduce what would be the English subject via a preposition. As with the verbal endings above, the impersonal usage is often translated as a passive verb in English.

Personal	Impersonal
Is féidir leis an obair a dhéanamh.	**Is féidir an obair a dhéanamh.**
'He can do the work.'	'The work can be done.'
Is cuma liom cé hé.	**Is cuma cé hé.**
'I don't care who he is.'	'It doesn't matter who he is.'
Ba cheart duit é a dhéanamh.	**Ba cheart é a dhéanamh.**
'You should do it.'	'It should be done; one should do it.'
Ní hionadh liom gur bhuaigh siad.	**Ní hionadh gur bhuaigh siad.**
'I'm not surprised that they won.'	'No wonder they won.'
Tá súil agam ag an scoil.	**Tá súil ag an scoil.**
'I expect ... at the school.'	'The teacher is expected at the school.'

Certain other verbs are used impersonally in that they do not express the semantic subject as a grammatical subject (positioned immediately following the verb, subject forms of pronouns, as described Chapter 5), but the impersonal endings are not used. The most common of these are the following.

Chlis/Chinn/Theip orm é a dhéanamh.	'I failed to do it.'
D'éirigh liom é a dhéanamh.	'I succeeded in doing it.'
Teastaíonn uaim é a dhéanamh.	'I want/need to do it.'
Tá uaim é a dhéanamh.	'I want/need to do it.'
Tá orm é a dhéanamh.	'I have to do it.'
Tá fúm é a dhé.anamh	'I intend to do it.'

(For the structure following the main verb and prepositional phrase, see the next chapters.)

Other passive and passive-like structures

Other structures can also look like English passives. One of these is a progressive usage (progressive forms were mentioned briefly in Chapter 7 and will be discussed further in Chapter 14).

Tá Gaillimh á mbualadh. '[The] Galway [team] are beating

them.' 'Galway are being beaten.'

The sentence above is ambiguous as it stands, but there is no ambiguity when an additional agent phrase, introduced with *ag* is added.

Tá Gaillimh á mbualadh ag Ciarraí.   'Galway are being beaten by Kerry.'

Even without an *ag* phrase, only a passive interpretation is available when the semantics of a sentence do not permit an active interpretation.

Tá an teach á thógáil.   'The house is being built.'

Sentences such as these have been argued by some linguists to be the only examples of a true passive voice in Irish.

Verbal nouns and adjectives

Irish has two *non-finite* verb forms (forms unmarked for tense or person) that serve various functions. The primary such forms, known as *verbal nouns*, can function as regular nouns, but also fulfill the roles of the verb forms known in other languages as gerunds (as in **Swimming** *is good for you*), infinitives (*I like* **to swim**), and participles (*Máire is* **swimming** *now*). The Irish verbal noun (VN) has a variety of structural features to be described in further detail in this and the following chapter. The second non-finite form, the *verbal adjective*, likewise has a dual function, as an ordinary adjective in some instances, but also as a verbal form equivalent to the past participle in English and other European languages.

Verbal noun formation

Unfortunately, there is no easy rule for the creation of verbal nouns from verb stems. Forms vary greatly and are for the most part not predictable. Moreover, the form of a verbal noun may vary from region to region, according to the dialect of the speaker. Learners are advised to learn the verbal noun along with the verb stem when it is first introduced, because it is highly useful and arguably the most frequently occurring of all verb forms. Most dictionaries list verbal noun forms separately from the verb stem. Despite the irregularity of verbal noun forms, however, some are more common than others, and a few patterns can be identified to help determine the form a verbal noun is likely to take. Forms of the Caighdeán Oifigiúil will be presented here, with common dialect variants occasionally presented as well.

Suffixation to the verb stem is the primary means of creating a verbal noun. Some of the most common VN suffixes are exemplified below. For all VNs, stems ending in *(a)igh* drop this syllable before the VN suffix is added. The first two suffixes below are by far the most common.

-(e)adh.	The commonest suffix for first-conjugation verbs, **–(e)adh** creates VN forms of many monosyllabic stems, including **glan**, **bris**, **ceap**, **pós**, **cas**, **caill**, **mol**, **póg**, **scrios**, **séid**, **scuab**, **cleacht**, **gearr**, **bearr**, **cum**, **fliuch**, **croith**, **geall**, **meall**, **múin**, **múch**, **pioc**, **scaip**, **stiúr**, **stop**, **togh**, producing such VNs as **glanadh**, **briseadh**, **ceapadh**, etc., with the **e** added to the spelling after a slender stem consonant. In a few verb stems ending with a slender consonant, the consonant is broadened: **buail: bualadh**, **fáisc: fáscadh**, and a handful of less common verbs.
-(i)ú.	This suffix is added to second-conjugation verb stems after dropping a final *(a)igh* from the imperative stem. Thus, **tosaigh** becomes **tosú**. Similarly, **bailigh: bailiú**, **mínigh: míniú**, **salaigh: salú**, **críochnaigh: críochnú**, **scrúdaigh: scrúdú**, **cruinnigh: cruinniú**, **beannaigh: beannú**, **aontaigh: aontú**, **breathnaigh: breathnú**, **cuidigh: cuidiú**.
-(e)ach.	Also typical of second-conjugation verbs, but less common, **-(e)ach** forms such verbal nouns as **ceannach**, **réiteach**, **eiteach**, **fuadach**, **clúdach**, and a few others. In some verbs a *t* is added: **imeacht**, **dúiseacht**, **toraíocht**, and, in the Connemara dialect, **ceannacht**. This augmented ending is also found in a few first-conjugation verbs; **gluais: gluaiseacht**, **fan: fanacht**, **éist: éisteacht**.
-(a)í.	Another less common second-conjugation suffix, this is used for a number of verbs ending in *(a)igh*, including **éirigh: éirí**, **fiafraigh: fiafraí**, **ionsaigh: ionsaí**, **taithigh: taithí**. Some speakers use **tosaí** instead of **tosú** as the VN of **tosaigh.**
-t.	A *-t* suffix forms verbal nouns in both conjugation classes. Examples include **bain: baint**, **ceil: ceilt**, **tiomáin: tiomáint**, **roinn: roinnt**, **taispeáin: taispeáint** from the first conjugation and **imir: imirt**, **oscail: oscailt**, **tarraing: tarraingt**, **díbir: díbirt** from the second conjugation, as well as the irregular verb **tabhair: tabhairt**. Verbal nouns formed with **-t** are all from stems ending in slender *l*, *n(g)*, or *r*.
-(e)amh.	Also found in both conjugation classes, **-amh** forms verbal nouns for **déan**, **caith**, **comhair**, **tuill**, **maith**, **seas**, **léigh**, **téigh**, **áirigh**. As with **-ú** (and all other suffixes) the final *igh* is omitted when the ending is added: **léigh: léamh**. Exceptionally, the vowel is *o* in **maígh: maíomh**.
-áil.	This suffix forms verbal nouns from first-conjugation verbs like **fág: fágáil**, **tóg: togáil**, **gabh: gabháil**, **fuaigh: fuáil**, and second-conjugation verbs like **teastaigh:**

Bare stems.

teastáil, admhaigh: admháil, teagmhaigh: teagmháil. An additional syllable -acht- sometimes precedes this suffix; fead: feadachtáil, mair: maireachtáil, airigh: aireachtáil. Verbs containing -áil in their stems retain it as verbal nouns. Thus, sábháil, péinteáil, and the like are both imperative stems and verbal nouns. In addition to the verbs ending in -áil just mentioned, a number of other verbal nouns are identical to their imperative stems. These include rith, ól, snámh, foghlaim, díol, scríobh, goid, fás, crith, meas, stad, troid, úsáid, íoc, bruith, leigheas, léim, and stad, among others. Some stems add no suffix, but broaden a slender final consonant; siúil: siúl, cuir: cur, braith: brath, tomhais: tomhas, loit: lot, tochais: tochas, ceangail: ceangal, taistil: taisteal. Some stems ending in *igh* drop this syllable, but add nothing else, giving a bare VN stem shorter than the imperative; pléigh: plé, brúigh: brú, dóigh: dó, damhsaigh: damhsa.

A few other endings are found, often in no more than two or three verbs:

-úint: creidiúnt, leanúint, feiliúint, oiriúint, eisiúint
-cint: tuiscint, feiscint (in Munster)
-(a)int: féachaint, insint (from inis, with regular vowel loss)
-an: leagan, ligean, athbheochan, coisreacan
-(i)m: titim, druidim, seinm, gairm

Other verbal noun forms are unique to a single verb, e.g., iarr: iarraidh, bligh: bleán.

Finally, dialect variation occasionally produces other idiosyncratic forms in addition to variants among the common endings above. Thus Standard and Munster *leanúint* is *leanacht* in Connacht and *leanaint* in Ulster; Munster *creidiúnt* becomes *creistiúint* for some Connacht speakers and *creidbháil* in Ulster. Standard and Connacht *tosú/tosaí* varies in the other dialects as *tosnú* in Munster and *toiseacht* in Ulster.

Irregular verbs may form their VNs regularly from the stem according to one of the processes listed above, or they may have unique VN forms. The first five verbs in Table 13.1 use one of the regular VN suffixes listed above, with irregular dialect variants in some cases. The remaining verbal nouns are irregular in all dialects.

Table 13.1 Irregular verbal nouns

Stem	Gloss	Verbal noun	Dialect variants
déan	'do, make'	déanamh	
feic	'see'	feiceáil	M: **feiscint**
clois	'hear'	cloisteáil	M: **clos, cloisint**
cluin	'hear'	cluinstin	U: **cluinstean**
fáigh	'get, find'	fáil	M, C: **fáil(t)**
tabhair	'give, bring'	tabhairt	
téigh	'go'	dul	C, U: **g(h)oil**
tar t(h)íocht	'come'	teacht	
U: **theacht**			
abair	'say'	rá	U: **rá(it)**
bí	'be'	bheith	
beir	'beir, carry, catch'	breith	
ith	'eat'	ithe	

Verbal nouns as nouns

Verbal nouns can function exactly like ordinary nouns, serving as subjects, objects of some other verb, or as objects of prepositions, as in the following examples (VNs are italicized).

Sin é an t-aon *mhíniú* amháin atá ar an scéal.
　'That's the only explanation for the matter.'
Thug sé *léim* fhada thar an sruthán.
　'He took a long leap across the stream.'
Bhí an *scrúdú* deacair.
　'The exam was hard.'

Being nouns morphologically, VNs also have genitive and plural forms, which will be discussed further in Chapter 16.

In other cases, no distinct noun in English, such as those illustrated above, exists to translate a VN. In such cases, an English gerund form serves the same purpose.

Is maith liom snámh.　I like swimming.'

Verbal functions of VNs

More often, however, VNs express verbal meanings. Two of these are extremely common. The progressive construction depicts an ongoing situation and is formed, with the verb *to be,* the preposition *ag,* and the VN. Any tense is possible in a progressive structure; all tense and

person information is provided by the verb *bí* 'be.'

Tá siad ag rith.	'They are running.'
Bhí siad ag rith.	'They were running.'
Bheidís ag rith.	'They would be running.'

In progressive structures, the VN serves the same role as the present participle in English progressives, which are formed very similarly.

Other verbal structures that rely on the VN are more readily translated as infinitives in English.

Ba mhaith linn imeacht.	'We'd like to leave.'
Caithfidh sibh imeacht.	'You must leave.'
Dúirt sí liom imeacht.	'She told me to leave.'

The next chapter will deal with these structures in greater detail, as well as introducing some less common verbal noun structures.

Verbal adjectives

The *verbal adjective*, as it is known in Irish grammatical tradition, is the equivalent of a *past participle* (e.g., *eaten, given*) in other Indo-European languages. Like the VN, the verbal adjective (VA) serves two functions, as a verb form and as an adjective. This section focuses on the formation of verbal adjectives, illustrated in Table 13.2.

Table 13.2 Regular verbal adjective forms

	Verb	*Gloss*	*Verbal adjective*
First-conjugation	**glan**	'clean'	**glanta**
	dún	'close'	**dúnta**
	bris	'break'	**briste**
	caill	'lose'	**caillte**
	nigh	'wash'	**nite**
	tit	'fall'	**tite**
	caith	'throw, spend'	**caite**
	scuab	'sweep'	**scuabtha**
	íoc	'pay'	**íoctha**
	tuig	'understand'	**tuigthe**
	cum	'compose'	**cumtha**
	ceap	'think'	**ceaptha**
	scar	'separate'	**scartha**
	scríobh	'write'	**scríofa**
	sníomh	'spin'	**sníofa**
Second-conjugation	**ceannaigh**	'buy'	**ceannaithe**
	bailigh	'gather, collect'	**bailithe**
	oscail	'open'	**oscailte**
	ceangail	'tie'	**ceangailte**
	eitil	'fly'	**eitilte**

First-conjugation (monosyllabic) verbs form most verbal adjectives by

adding the suffix *-ta* (*-te* following a slender consonant) to the imperative stem. A stem-final *gh* is dropped out of the spelling, as is a stem final *t* or *th*.

Stems ending in *b, c, g, m, p,* or *r* instead add *-tha/the*. *Mh* and *bh* combine with *th* as *f*.

The VA suffix for second-conjugation verbs ending in *(a)igh* is also *-the*, again with the *gh* dropped. Those ending in a consonant add *-te/the*, depending on the final consonant. Unstressed vowels in the second syllable may be lost.

Some verbs of both classes broaden a final consonant before adding *-ta/tha*:

> *siúil* 'walk': **siúlta** 'walked,' **cuir** 'put, place': **curtha** 'put, placed,' **imir** 'play': **imeartha** 'played.'

Irregular verbs form their adjectives regularly from the imperative stem according to the patterns above (*déan*: *déanta*, *ith*: *ite*, etc.), with the following exceptions, which use other stem forms than the imperative.

Table 13.3 Irregular verbal adjectives

Basis of VA form	Imperative stem	Gloss	Verbal adjective
VN stem	**téigh**	'go'	**dulta**
	abair	'say'	**ráite**
Present stem	**tar**	'come'	**tagtha**
	tabhair	'give, bring'	**tugtha**

Like the future-tense endings beginning with *f* (Chapter 9), the suffix *-tha* causes devoicing of a stem final *b, c, d, g,* and *mh/bh* to which it is added. Thus *tagtha*, above, is pronounced/takə/.

Adjectival uses of these forms are fairly straightforward, with some idiomatic uses; a few examples here will suffice.

Tá an fhuinneog briste.	'The window is broken.'
Cuir caoi ar an bhfuinneog bhriste.	'Repair the broken window.'
Tá an bóthar seo casta.	'This road is winding.'
D'inis sé scéal casta dom.	'He told me a complicated story.'

The verbal uses of these forms will be covered in greater detail in the next chapter.

The syntax of verbal nouns and adjectives

Expressions of aspect

Verbal nouns appear in a variety of constructions expressing aspectual distinctions that supplement the tense system described in previous chapters.

Aspect refers to the different points of view, independent of time reference, that can be taken of an action or event, i.e., whether it is ongoing at the time referred to, just completed, about to happen, regularly recurring in a particular time period, or viewed as a whole without any attention to the internal evolution of the event. The present and the past-habitual endings introduced in Chapter 9 include aspect (habitual) along with tense, but many other viewpoints are conveyed by structures using verbal nouns or adjectives in combination with an auxilary verb that expresses tense and person.

Progressive functions

Progressive aspect signals that an action is ongoing at the time of speech or another time specified in the discourse. Progressive structures are formed with *bí,* and a phrase consisting minimally of a verbal noun introduced by *ag* 'at,' as a complementizer.

Tá sí ag foghlaim Gaeilge.	"She is learning Irish (i.e., now).'
Bhí sí ag foghlaim Gaeilge anuraidh.	"She was learning Irish last year.'

Historically, a direct object following a verbal noun appears in the genitive case (see Section 16.2 in Chapter 16), although there is some variation in the contemporary language and some speakers do not use the genitive consistently.

Tá siad ag imirt peile (peil = Gaelic football).
'They are playing football.'

If the object is a pronoun, it appears as a possessive determiner preceding the VN (with appropriate mutations, as described in Section 17.1.5 in Chapter 17).

Ta siad á imirt.	'They are playing it.'

In the above example, the possessor *a* contracts with *ag*, taking the form *á*. *Do* (contracted to *d'* before a vowel) replaces *ag* before pronominal possessors other than *a*.

Bhí siad do do mholadh.	"They were praising you.'
Tá siad dár moladh.	'They are praising us.'

14.1.1 Progressive forms following other verbs

The same progressive structure can appear as the complement of certain verbs other than *bí*. These include verbs of perception and of starting/stopping and continuing.

An bhfaca tú mé ag damhsa?	"Did you see me dancing?'
Cloisim na buachaillí ag imirt peile.	'I hear the boys playing football.'
D'airigh muid sibh ag teacht.	'We heard you coming.'
Thosaigh sé ag caitheamh cloch leis.	'He began throwing rocks at him.'
Lean ort ag obair.	'Keep on working.'
Stop an sneachta ag titim.	'The snow stopped falling.'

Phrases of going and coming, themselves sometimes progressive in form, can be followed by another progressive structure to signal intent to perform an action in the immediate future.

Tá siad ag dul ag imirt peile.	'They are going to play football.'
Tá siad ag teacht ag imirt peile.	'They are coming to play football.'

The same structure is used to identify an ongoing ability (or lack thereof).

Tá Tadhg go maith ag imirt peile.	'Tadhg is good at playing football.'
Níl aon mhaith liom ag snámh.	'I'm no good at swimming.'

14.1.2 States

In English, ongoing states are expressed identically to progressive actions, but in Irish the two have distinct forms. A verbal noun indicating that the subject is in a particular position is introduced by *i(n)* and a possessive form matching the person of the subject.

Tá mé i mo shuí.	'I am sitting (i.e., seated).'
Tá sibh i bhur seasamh.	'You are standing (i.e., on your feet).'
Tá sí ina luí.	'She is lying down (e.g., supine).'

When the progressive form with *ag* is used with these verbs, the sentence can only refer to the act of moving into the specified position, a distinction that English does not make.

Tá mé ag suí (síos).	'I am sitting (down).'
Tá sibh ag seasamh (suas).	'You are standing (up).'
Tá sí ag luí (siar).	'She is lying (down/back).'

Other states can be expressed by this structure with *in* + possessor, for example, sleeping, waking, and residing.

Tá Róisín ina codladh.	'Róisín is asleep.'
Tá Breandán ina dhúiseacht.	'Breandán is awake.'
Tá siad ina gcónaí san Iodáil.	'They are living in Italy.'

More metaphorically, the same structure is used as a substitute for classification sentences with the copula, especially when the class membership is temporary or the speaker's intent is to emphasis a change of state, or just when precision of time reference is desired, which is not possible with the copula. This usage was mentioned briefly in Chapter 7.

> **Bhí Niamh ina múinteoir ach tá sí ina craoltóir anois.**
> 'Niamh was a teacher but now she is a broadcaster.'
> **Tá do mhac ina fhear anois.**
> 'Your son is a man now.'
> **Beidh mé i mo sheanduine nuair a thiocfaidh tú ar ais.**
> 'I'll be an old person when you come back.'

Certain expressions of kinship may use this construction as well. Alongside the possessive determiners to be introduced in Chapter 17, a full-sentence expression of kinship may take the form:

Tá se ina cholceathar aici.	'He's a cousin of hers, he's her cousin.'

An alternative structure uses the copula:

Is colceathar dom/liom í.	'She's my cousin/a cousin of mine.'

Other states are expressed by the preposition *ar* (without possessive), sometimes with idiomatic meaning. The idiomaticity of this use of *ar* is reflected in the absence of the lenition that normally follows this preposition (cf. Chapter 22).

Tá an pictiúr ar crochadh anseo.	'The picture is hanging here.'
Tá sé ar iarraidh.	'He/it is missing.'
Tá guthán ar fáil anseo.	'A phone is available here.'

Infinitive-like functions

In other uses, the VN can be translated into English as an infinitive (*to do*).

An bhfuil tú ag iarraidh *breathnú* ar an teilifís?
'Do you want *to watch* TV?'

The structure differs from the progressive in several ways. These VNs typically follow another predicate, the subject of which is usually understood to be the same as the subject of the verbal noun.

If the VN has a direct object, it precedes the VN, separated from it by the particle *a*, which causes lenition.

Tá sí in ann Gaeilge a thuiscint.   'She is able to understand Irish.'
Tá sé deacair teanga nua a fhoghlaim.   'It is hard to learn a new language.'
Gheall tú cúnamh a thabhairt dúinn.   'You promised to help us.'
Rinne mé iarracht an obair a dhéanamh, ach chinn orm í achríochnú.
'I tried to do the work but failed to finish it.'

Occasionally, an intransitive VN may have a subject distinct from that of the main verb.

Ba mhaith liom iad a theacht.   'I'd like them to come.'

Some dialects allow both a subject and an object with a VN. McCloskey (1980b) cites many examples from Ulster and a few from other regions, including the following.

i ndiaidh *tú do dhícheall* a dhéanamh…   'after *you* doing *your best*…'
…agus *mo namhaid greim* a fháil ar an pháipéar…
'and [for] *my enemy* to get *hold* of the paper…'

The examples from Munster show a different word order, namely SVO.

Ní thaithneann leat *mé* a thabhairt *namhaid* uirthi.

'You don't like *me* to call her an *enemy*.'

In Connacht the word order follows the Ulster pattern when such forms occur with a verbal noun, but verbal noun complements like these, with two noun phrases accompanying a verbal noun, are very rare outside Ulster; many contemporary speakers reject them as ungrammatical. In the example above, for instance, a Connacht speaker would probably prefer *Ní thaitnaíonn leat go dtabharfainn namhaid uirthi.*

Prepositional phrases, adjectives, and adverbs follow the VN in their usual post-verbal positions.

Ba mhaith liom dul abhaile anois.	'I'd like to go home now.'
Tá mé ag iarraidh caint leis amárach.	'I want to talk to him tomorrow.'

Which structure?

In most cases one or the other structure is required in a given syntactic context. Although we are using the terms *progressive structure* (*ag* + VN + genitive NP) and *infinitive structure* (NP + *a* + VN) as shorthand for the two, they do not align perfectly with these structures in English. For example, the immediate future introduced by *going to* in English uses the progressive structure in Irish, as do complements of *tosaigh*–

'begin,' although the English equivalent allows both structures (*begin working* or *begin to work*). A semantic contrast offers some guidance; it is subtle, but can be summarized as follows: the progressive structure is used in Irish to signal an action that is ongoing at the time of reference (either the time of the utterance or of another verb in the sentence), or is perceived as imminent, as in the immediate future use of *going to* (although it may be noted that in some dialects, e.g., in parts of Donegal, the immediate future function may use the infinitive structure instead). The infinitive structure is used for most other verbal complements, in which the event expressed by the VN is seen as merely potential or desired, with no implication of actual achievement. These include commands, promises, and expressions of desire, obligation, ability, permission, attempt, and evaluation. Several of these are illustrated above; others will be detailed in the next chapter.

Aspect in prepositional complements

As complements of specific prepositions, verbal noun structures (of the infinitive type) convey yet other aspectual distinctions. A VN following *tar éis* or *i ndiaidh* (the latter being especially common in northern dialects of Mayo and Donegal), indicates that the event has happened recently, and functions rather like a present perfect form in English.

Tá sé tar éis glaoch a chur orm.	'He has just phoned me.'
Tá siad i ndiaidh pósadh.	'They've got married.'

An immediately prospective or intended action (*about to*) is signalled by a VN phrase following *ar tí, chun, le,* or *le haghaidh*.

Tá mé le/chun dul go Ciarraí amárach.	'I'm to go to Kerry tomorrow.'
Bhí mé le haghaidh ceist a chur ort.	'I was about to ask you a question.'
Tá mé ar tí é sin a léamh.	'I'm about to read that.'
Tá Stiofán ar tí éirí.	'Stiofán is about to get up.'

Ar tí expresses the greatest sense of immediacy. Both *le* and *chun* can be used to express an immediate prospective action, but also may just indicate an event that is meant to happen at some unspecified time in the future.

Le (favored in Connacht) and *chun* (favored in Munster) also appear in other structures, of a more passive nature, indicating something that needs to be done, or is planned.

Tá obair le déanamh againn.	'We have work to do.'
Tá na soithí le níochán.	'The dishes need to be washed.'
Tá an féar chun bainte.	'The grass is to be cut.'

Note that *chun* requires the genitive case of the verbal noun (citation form is *baint*).

Le and *chun* may also introduce an adverbial phrase meaning *in order to* (see also Section 23.5.2 in Chapter 23).

Chuaigh siad go Baile Átha Cliath le/chun carr a cheannach.
'They went to Dublin to buy a car.'

Verbal adjectives in perfect clauses

The *present perfect*, formed with *have* and a past participle (*I have eaten*) is more widely used in English than in Irish, which often uses a simple tense where an English speaker might use the perfect.

An bhfaca tú Neasa le gairid?	'Have you seen Neasa recently?'
An bhfuil tú i bhfad in Éirinn?	'Have you been in Ireland long?'

In fact, Irish English often follows the Irish pattern here: *Are you long in Ireland?* Particularly where states are concerned (being, residing, thinking, etc.), the present tense is the norm. The structures introduced by *tar éis/i ndiaidh*, described above, also serve for the immediate past usage of the perfect.

A structure with *bí* and a verbal adjective also conveys a perfect aspect, with emphasis on the resulting state produced by the action.

Tá carr nua ceannaithe ag Nóirín.	'Noirín has bought a new car.'

(The purchase was completed fairly recently and Nóirín is in possession of the car.)

Other examples of this structure include the following.

Cén t-olc atá déanta ort?	'What harm has been done to you?'
Tá an leabhar sin léite agam. Tóg é.	'I've read that book. Take it.'

Intransitive verbs also form perfects with this structure.

Tá na ceoltóirí imithe.	'The musicians have left.'
Níl ach triúr fanta.	'Only three people have remained/are left.'

On occasion, a sentence with this same structure may feel rather like a passive.

Bhí sé glactha ag Fianna Fáil mar naomhphatrún dá chuid féin.	"He was accepted by Fianna Fáil as a patron saint of their own.'
Bhí leath a shaothar déanta.	'Half his work was done.'
Tá an bille íoctha.	'The bill has been paid.'

But the primary function of sentences with *bí* and a VA is usually perfect, as addition of an agent to the last example above makes clear.

Tá an bille íoctha agam.	'I have paid the bill.'

Other examples with clear perfect interpretation are given below.

Bhí an scéal insithe aige do Dhónall sula tháinig Mánas.
' 'He had told Dónall the story before Mánas came.'
Beidh mála airgid agat nuair a bheas sé saothraithe agat.
'You'll have a sack of money when you [will] have earned it.'
Bhí siad tagtha isteach sa gcearnóg.
             'They had come into the square.'
Tá an scannán sin feicthe agam.   'I've seen that film.'

Mood

Mood refers to the grammatical expression of a speaker's attitude toward the event(s) described by a verb, in particular the degree of a speaker's commitment to the reality of the event. Languages vary greatly in the range of modal concepts they distinguish grammatically and in the ways they express them. In many Indo-European languages, verbal inflections can distinguish certain mood categories, specifically indicative (declarations of fact) and subjunctive (less certainly factual). Others, like English, rely on a series of auxiliary verbs to express degrees of certainty or commitment to factuality. Irish uses both strategies, which will be discussed in this chapter.

Inflectional moods

Traditionally, Irish grammarians identify four moods in Irish verbal inflection: *indicative, conditional, imperative*, and *subjunctive*. The formation of the first two of these was covered in Chapters 9–12. When an utterance presents the verbal event as a statement of fact, the indicative mood is used; this is the mood of all the tense endings described in Chapter 9, apart from the conditional. Although technically a mood, the conditional was introduced in that chapter because it shares similarities in form to tense endings introduced there, and functions just like tenses in many ways. The subjunctive mood will be presented below. The syntax of conditional sentences will be covered further in Chapter 25. The imperative mood was introduced in Chapter 6 and will be developed further below.

15.1.1 Imperative

The primary imperative form, addressed to a second-person interlocutor, is the verb stem, with the plural endings *-(a)igí/(a)ígí*, as introduced in Section 6.5, in Chapter 6. Forms also exist in other persons, although they are considerably rarer. English typically

translates them with forms of the sort *Let them eat cake*, or *(May) peace be with you.*

First-person and impersonal imperative endings are identical to the present habitual in the singular: *glanaim, rithim, tosaím, glantar*, etc.; first-person plural forms take the suffix *-(a)imis/(a)ímis*: *glanaimis, rithimis, tosaímis*'let's clean/run/start.' The third-person imperative forms are identical to those of the past habitual, but without lenition of an initial consonant: *Glanadh sé a sheomra–* 'Let him/may he clean his room.' *Tosaídís!* 'Let them begin!'

Irregular verbs add the above endings to the imperative stem used for ordinary (second-person) commands in most cases: *bí: bíodh sé, abair: abraimís, téigh: téadh sé.* However, *tar* 'come' and *tabhair* 'give, take' use the present stem for first- and third-person imperatives: *tagaim: tagadh sé, tugaim: tugadh sé.*

Although non-second-person imperatives are fairly rare colloquially, there are situations in which no other option is available in Irish. Since possession is expressed by the complex structure *bí* + possessed item + *ag* + possessor (cf. Section 7.3, Chapter 7), a second-person possessor, although the subject of an English sentence, is not the Irish grammatical subject; instead the grammatical subject is the thing he or she possesses. Thus the command must be third-person, with reference to that subject.

Bíodh cupán eile tae agat.   'Have another cup of tea.'

Similarly, in idioms expressing emotions and other states (cf. Section 7.3.2, Chapter 7), where the state occupies subject position and the experiencer of the emotion is dependent on the preposition *ar*, third-person imperatives reflect the third-person grammatical subject.

Ná bíodh imní ort.   'Don't worry.' (Lit., 'let worry not be on you.')

15.1.2 Subjunctive

Subjunctive forms are used in clauses introduced by *go* for verbs viewed as expressing a wish or desire, or when the speaker is for other reasons not committed to the actuality of the event described by the verb. The only subjunctive tenses are present and past. The present subjunctive endings are as follows, added to the imperative stems of regular verbs (less a final *(a)igh*).

> First-conjugation: **-a/e: glana, rithe**
> Second-conjugation: **–(a)í: tosaí, imrí**

Stems ending in a vowel after omission of *(a)igh* do not take a suffix; their stem form is the subjunctive: *go ndó sé, go lé tú, go ní sé,* etc.

The past subjunctive suffixes are identical to the past habitual endings presented in Chapter 9.

Irregular verbs form their present subjunctives by attaching the first-conjugation endings listed above to their present indicative stems, adjusted for dialect variation as described in Section 10.9, Chapter 10. The verbs that in Ulster dialects have non-standard independent forms (e.g., *ní*–'do', *tí*–'see') use the dependent forms for the subjunctive, thus following the standard. Only *bí* forms its subjunctive irregularly; the present subjunctive is identical to the dependent past indicative (*raibh*). The past subjunctive is identical to the conditional (*beadh*).

The most common contemporary use of subjunctive forms is in formal blessings, prayers, and curses, of which the following are examples.

Go sabhála Dia sinn!	'God save us!'
Go dtachta an Diabhail thú!	'May the devil choke you!'
Go dté tú slán.	'Go safely.'
Go ndéana Dia grásta ar a anam.	'God have mercy on his soul.'
Go n-éirí an bóthar leat	'May you succeed on the road (i.e., *bon voyage*)'

The usual expression of thanks is also of this form; *go raibh maith agat* 'thank you' means literally *may you have good*.

The subjunctive may also be found in phrases relating to unrealized future events.

> **Fan go bhfeice tú**–'Wait till you see.'
> **Fanfaidh tú i bhfad sula bhfaighe tú freagra**–
>   'You'll wait a long time before you get an answer.'

However, many speakers now use a future indicative form for these. In many dialects, the two sound essentially identical, but they can be distinguished in the case of some irregular verbs. Thus, both *Fan go dtaga sé* and *Fan go dtiocfaidh sé*'Wait till he comes' are heard; although the former is the historical form, the latter may now be more common. Similarly, the past subjunctive (found after past-tense verbs) may appear in the conditional or the historical subjunctive form.

Dúirt sé linn fanacht go dtagadh/dtiocfadh sé ar ais.
   'He told us to wait until he came back.'

Negative subjunctive clauses are introduced by *nár* (*ná* before *raibh*).

Nár laga Dia thú!   'May God not weaken you.'
Ná raibh rath ort!   'May you not prosper.'

Modal predicates

Rare as it is in Irish, the English subjunctive is even more vestigial, surviving primarily in set phrases like *far be it from me* or *if I were you*. Instead, English relies on a range of auxiliary verbs to indicate degrees of uncertainty or supposition about the reality of an event. Contrast *It is raining* or *It is going to rain* (a sure thing in the speaker's mind) with *It must be raining, It may be raining, It might rain, It could rain, It may rain, It should rain* (all less certain).

Irish similarly expresses certain modal concepts with separate verbal forms. These translate such English modal auxiliaries as *can, could, may, might, must, ought, should*, etc. The Irish modals serve as the main predicate of the sentence, with the verbal meaning expressed in a subordinate clause, either a tensed verb introduced by *go* or with a verbal noun phrase of the infinitive type.

Caithfidh sibh imeacht anois.   'You must leave now.'
Bhí air imeacht go luath.   'He had to leave early.'
Ba cheart duit dul abhaile.   'You should go home.'
Tá mé in ann Fraincis a labhairt.   'I can speak French.'
An féidir leat snámh?   'Can you swim?'
D'fhéadfadh sé fanacht freisin.   'He could stay, too.'
An bhfuil cead againn dul amach?   'May we go out?'

When the verbal noun structure is used, the modal meaning most often signals necessity or obligation, ability, or permission, as in the examples above.

Several modal predicates can also be used *epistemically*, meaning that they express information about the speaker's knowledge and beliefs regarding the verbal event, often indicating a weaker commitment to the factuality of the complement or its likelihood of occurring; epistemic modals signal possibility, probability, supposition, or logical necessity, as in the following examples. Most often, this epistemic modality is indicated by a tensed subordinate clause.

Caithfidh (sé) go bhfuil sí tinn.   'She must be sick.'

Is féidir go bhfuil sí tinn.	'It could be that she's sick.'
Ní féidir gur tú Aoife!	'You can't be Aoife!'
D'fhéadfadh sé go bhfuil sí tinn.	'It could be that she's sick.'
B'fhéidir go bhfuil sí tinn.	'She might be sick.'

Some predicates, like *bí ar…*, *b'éigean do…*, *bí in ann*, are not used in epistemic senses and always have the obligation or ability readings, never logical necessity or possibility. As such, they are always followed by verbal noun complements. Similarly, *tá cead ag…* only has a permission interpretation. Conversely, *b'fhéidir* is always epistemic and therefore followed by a tensed clause. Further levels of doubt can be signalled by choice of indicative or conditional forms.

B'fhéidir go dtiocfaidh sé.	'Maybe he will come.'
B'fhéidir go dtiocfadh sé.	'Perhaps he might come.'

Tense restrictions apply to some of these predicates. *Caithfidh mé*–'I must' can only refer to a prospective necessity viewed from the moment of speech. The form is future (or conditional where appropriate), even when the necessity applies to the moment of speech, although present-tense forms occur occasionally in Munster Irish. To report a past necessity, *b'éigean dom* or *bhí orm…*'I had to' are used instead. Similarly, *is féidir le* cannot be used to report past ability or permission, because its formal past tense, *b'fhéidir*, has become frozen in its epistemic meaning of *perhaps, maybe*. Therefore, to express a reported ability such as *I could, I was able to* other predicates must be used, such as *bhí mé in ann, d'fhéad mé*.

A variety of other modal predicates, many of them idiomatic and dialect specific, also express the above-mentioned concepts. Those exemplified above are the most common, and are found across dialects, but the list should not be considered exhaustive.

Chapter 16

Nouns and noun phrases

The nouns in a sentence identify the participants in the event specified by the verb. At least one noun, the subject, is generally present in any sentence (possibly represented by a verbal suffix, as in *tuigim* '*I* understand'). Depending on the verb, other nouns may be present, identifying roles of direct object, indirect object, and occasionally other roles such as location. A simple noun (or pronoun, cf. next chapter) suffices to form a grammatical subject or object, but more complex noun phrases (NPs) are also found in these grammatical roles, in which the noun in question is accompanied by modifying elements such as adjectives, prepositional phrases, determiners, and other material. This chapter uses the simplest possible examples; formation of more complex NPs and the grammatical elements they may contain will be covered in the next section.

Properties of nouns

Nouns have certain inherent grammatical properties, which are reflected in their own forms as well as in the forms of any modifiers associated with them in the noun phrase. Additionally, the role a noun phrase plays in the sentence may require distinctive marking for case. The following sections describe the categories of gender, number, and case, as they are reflected in the forms of Irish nouns.

16.1.1 Gender

Each noun has an inherent *gender*, known as *masculine* or *feminine*; these designations are strictly grammatical classifications and do not necessarily reflect the biological status of the noun's referent. Gender is not always obvious from the form of a noun, and is best simply learned along with the noun's meaning. Dictionaries usually identify a noun's gender along with its definition and other features discussed below.

Although the gender of Irish nouns is not fully predictable from their form or meaning, a few guidelines can be given for identifying gender of unfamiliar words when a dictionary is not available. Most nouns referring to humans and animals do conform in grammatical gender to the biological sex the noun refers to. Thus, the following are masculine: *fear, buachaill, mac, sagart, tarbh, reithe, coileach*, and the following are feminine: *bean, iníon, banrialta, bó, cearc, cráin, láir*. However, mismatches are also found; for example, *cailín* 'girl' is grammatically masculine, and *stail* 'stallion' is grammatically feminine. Other nouns for animals can refer to either the male or female of a species: *madra, cat, capall, éan* are grammatically masculine and *muc* 'pig' and *caora* (technically 'ewe' but also used generically for 'sheep') are feminine. To specify whether the animal is male or female, the adjectives *fireann* 'male' or *baineann* 'female' can be used. Similarly, some nouns for people can refer to either sex, e.g., *comharsa, baintreach, beirt* are grammatically feminine and *cara, duine, leanbh, páiste* are masculine. For humans, the genitive case (see below) of *fear* 'man' or *bean* 'woman' can be used to specify if needed: *baintreach fir* 'widower,' *cara mná* 'female friend.' A prefix, *ban-*, signals a female of certain traditionally masculine professions, e.g., *bangharda* 'policewoman,' *banaisteoir* 'actress,' but this usage has fallen into some disfavor recently, and the prefix is often omitted. Most recently, *banaltra* 'nurse,' for which no unprefixed form was formerly in use, has been reduced to *altra* in current usage.

The forms of certain nouns can offer a clue as to their gender as well. Many nouns ending in a broad consonant are masculine, including all nouns ending in the syllables *as, án, ar, éal, éar*, among others; nouns with the agentive endings *-(e)óir* (e.g., *ceoltóir–* 'singer'), *-éir* (e.g., *siúinéir* 'carpenter') and *-(a)í* (e.g., *rúnaí–* 'secretary') are also masculine. Nouns ending in *-ín* are masculine if *-ín* forms part of the basic word (cf. *cailín*, above), but if *-ín* is added to a noun as a diminutive suffix, the noun retains the gender of its non-diminutive counterpart. Thus, *capaillín* 'little horse, pony' is masculine like *capall*, but *spúnóigín* 'little spoon' is feminine, like *spúnóg*. Conversely, other final sequences generally signal a feminine noun, such as *-(e)óg* (e.g., *fuinneog* 'window'), *-áil* (*ofráíl*; 'offering'), *-ilt* (*eitilt* 'flight'), *-int* (*caint* 'talk'), *-áid* (*comparáid* 'comparison'), *-óíd* (*siúlóid* 'walking'), *-aois* (*foraois* 'forest.'). Mass nouns (see Section 16.1.2) ending in *-(e)ach* (e.g., *báisteach* 'rain') are also feminine, although countable nouns with this ending are masculine, like *teach* 'house,' and names of nationalities, like *Sasanach*–'English person.' Ó Siadhail (1989) offers a detailed list of forms that help predict gender.

Within a noun phrase (see Section 16.2), gender differences are

reflected in lenition of adjectives modifying feminine nouns and of the nouns themselves following the definite article *an* (see Chapter 19).

> **fear maith**   'a good man'
>   **an fear maith**   'the good man'
> **bean mhaith**   'a good woman'
>   **an bhean mhaith** 'the good woman'

These and other mutation effects will be described in further detail later.

Pronoun choice is also determined in large part (but not entirely) by a noun's grammatical gender. The pronoun choice for human nouns follows biological sex, so that the feminine pronoun *(s)í* is used for grammatically masculine *cailín*. Animals and inanimate nouns are usually referred to by the pronoun that matches the noun's grammatical gender. Thus, *(s)í* is the appropriate pronoun for words such as *leaba* 'bed,' *cathair* 'city,' *tine* 'fire,' *stail* 'stallion,' etc., and *(s)é* for such words as *teach* 'house,' *bord* 'table,' *baile* 'town,' and *cat* 'cat.' However, vehicles (e.g., *carr, bus, bád*) are often referred to by feminine pronouns regardless of their grammatical gender. There is a certain amount of dialect variation in regard to both gender and pronoun choice, and other mismatches between noun gender and pronoun reference can occasionally be found. Further discussion of some of these variations can be found in Ó Siadhail (1989). Pronoun forms are described in Chapter 17.

16.1.2 Number

Nouns also can be marked for *number*, usually singular or plural, but vestiges of an old dual form are also seen on occasion. Not all nouns are regularly marked for number, however. *Proper nouns*, i.e., names of people and places, do not usually have plural forms. Other nouns, known as *common nouns*, can be divided into two classes. *Mass nouns* are those referring to undifferentiated substances whose parts cannot be counted, like *sand, water, money*, and abstract concepts like *freedom, friendship, affection.* These nouns do not as a rule distinguish number. All others, known as *count nouns* because they are in fact countable, show separate forms for singular and plural

Plural marking is complex and not always predictable, and can vary considerably from dialect to dialect. Official Standard plurals are provided with the entry for each noun in some of the larger

dictionaries, and most traditional grammars include lists of nouns belonging to each of the five traditional declension classes, along with their plurals. This section takes a slightly different approach, describing the most common plural formation processes without relying on the traditional declension classes, as these lead to some redundancies in regard to plural formation. To a limited extent it is possible to identify which plural form might apply to a given noun or at least to make an educated guess, but, ultimately, the plural form in use for a particular noun must be learned with the noun itself, and may vary regionally.

Masculine nouns ending in a broad consonant often form their plurals by making the final consonant slender; this is marked in spelling by the letter *i* before the consonant (the spelling *éa* changes to *éi*, which doesn't alter vowel pronunciation).

bád: báid	'boat'
sagart: sagairt	'priest'
focal: focail	'word'
séipéal: séipéil	'chapel'

In some cases, the vowel will change along with the final consonant, in particular, the vowel written *ea* (pronounced /a/) and the diphthong *ia*. This same change of vowel is a common accompaniment of consonant quality change, and will be seen in other contexts throughout the grammar. Certain other vowels change their pronunciation in some dialects, but not their spelling.

fear: fir	'man'
ceann: cinn	'head'
breac: bric	'trout'
leanbh: linbh	'child, baby'
iasc: éisc	'fish'
foirgneamh: foirgnimh	'building'

Masculine nouns ending in *(e)ach* constitute a subclass of this group. Their plurals include a change of *ch* to *gh* along with slenderization when the noun refers to nationalities or other sorts of people, but other nouns of this form change *(e)ach* to *-(a)í* in the plural.

Albanach: Albanaigh	'Scot'
bacach: bacaigh	'beggar'
éadach: éadaí	'cloth, clothing'
orlach: orlaí	'inch'

Other nouns form their plurals with suffixes, the most common of which are listed below, with some examples and any generalizations that can be made about the nouns to which they apply.

-(a)í. A very common suffix for mostly masculine nouns ending in a

short vowel, or in *-ín, -eoir, -éir, -úir,* and a few others (e.g., *rud* 'thing'), and feminine nouns ending in a slender consonant.

pionta: piontaí	'pint'
fáinne: fáinní	'ring'
cailín: cailíní	'girl'
bádóir: bádóirí	'boatman'
siúinéir: siúinéirí	'carpenter'
rud: rudaí	'thing'
oifig: oifigí	'office'
contúirt: contúirtí	'danger'
seachtain: seachtainí	'week'

-te. A few nouns, mostly ending in *le* or *ne*, take this suffix instead of *-í*.

baile: bailte	'town'
míle: mílte	'mile'
féile: féilte	'festival, feast'
léine: léinte	'shirt'
sloinne: slointe	'surname'

-the. Found commonly after masculine nouns ending in a long vowel (the fada is dropped from an unstressed *í*).

croí: croíthe	'heart'
ainmhí: ainmhithe	'animal'
rúnaí: rúnaithe	'secretary'
finné: finnéithe	'witness'

-(e)anna. Mostly found with one-syllable nouns of both genders. The initial vowel is dropped after monosyllables ending in a long vowel or diphthong.

bus: busanna	'bus'
crois: croiseanna	'cross'
deoch: deochanna	'drink'
bláth: bláthanna	'flower'
trá: tránna	'beach'
lao: laonna	'calf'
bua: buanna	'victory'

-a. A common plural for feminine nouns ending in a broad consonant, including those ending in *-eog/óg, -lann,* and *-ach*. A few nouns ending in slender consonants add *-e*.

cluas: cluasa	'ear'
bróg: broga	'shoe'
clann: clanna	'family'
fuinneog: fuinneoga	'window'
leabharlann: leabharlanna	'library'
scornach: scornacha	'throat'
súil: súile	'eye'

-(e)acha. Another common suffix, found with single- and multi-syllable words of both genders.

cathaoir: cathaoireacha	'chair'
deartháir: deartháireacha	'brother'
deirfiúr: deirfiúracha	'sister'

This suffix seems to be spreading in some dialects. It is widely used in Connemara, for example, in place of various plurals found in the CO and other dialects for a number of words including *áit, scoil,* and *tine,* among others.

In each of the three suffixes immediately above (*-(e)anna, -a, -(e)acha*), the final *a* is pronounced as unstressed schwa in Munster, but many speakers north of the Shannon pronounce it as /iː/, as if it were written with *í* (e.g., as if *busannaí, fuinneogaí, cathaoireachaí*).

-ta. Found in a number of monosyllabic words ending in *l* or *n,* and occasionally *r* (in which case the *t* is lenited to *th*). For example, *saol* 'life,' plural *saolta* 'lives,' *stór* 'treasure,' plural *stórtha* 'treasures.'

Verbal nouns expressing countable events or outcomes of actions also have plurals; these vary in form according to the verbal noun; for example, *smaointe* 'thoughts' (from *smaoineamh* 'thinking'), *tógálacha* 'structures' (from *tógáil* 'building'), *póstaí* 'marriages' (from *pósadh* 'marrying').

16.1.3 Phonological processes in plural formation

Plural suffixes are often accompanied by other changes to the pronunciation and spelling of the noun. In addition to pluralization by consonant change mentioned at the beginning of the last section, some final slender consonants become broad when a plural suffix is added (although broadening alone never marks plurality). Verbal nouns ending in *-áil* fall into this category, along with a few others. Broadening is particularly common before the suffix *-acha.*

flaith: flatha	'prince, ruler'
ofráil: ofrálacha	'offering'
traein: traenacha	'train'
riail: rialacha	'rule'
láir: láracha	'mare'

The change of vowels accompanying plurals formed with a slender consonant was introduced in Section 16.1.2. Vowel and consonant changes may also accompany some suffixes, as shown below. The changes with suffixation are more varied than those associated with

slender-consonant plurals.

sliabh: sléibhte	'mountain'
scian: sceana	'knife'
cill: cealla	'churchyard'
binn: beanna	'peak'

Another phonological change that accompanies the addition of plural suffixes is the loss of a short unstressed vowel before the suffix. This is particularly common with the suffix *-acha*, but is found with *-a/e* as well.

briathar: briathra	'verb'
uimhir: uimhreacha	'number'

Frequently the loss of the vowel brings together two consonants of different qualities. When this happens, the cluster usually becomes slender, regardless of which consonant is slender in the singular.

cloigeann: cloigne	'head, skull'
coinneal: coinnle	'candle'
obair: oibreacha	'work'
athair: aithreacha	'father'
abhainn: aibhneacha	'river'

Some nouns even make two originally broad consonants slender.

bóthar: bóithre	'road'
doras: doirse	'door'

Exceptionally, both consonants become broad, assimilating to the first, in:

cathair: cathracha	'city'

The above do not exhaust the possibilities for plural forms. Other endings are found with only a few nouns. Additionally, dialects vary to a considerable degree in their plural formation, in ways that for the most part cannot be predicted. Often, one of the common suffixes above is substituted in some region for a different standard plural form; on occasion a dialect area will create an idiosyncratic plural not found elsewhere. A few patterned variations have been noted, such as the northern dialects' tendency to pronounce a schwa in a suffix as *í*. The spread of the suffix *-achaí* in Connemara was also mentioned, and this plural may also be accompanied by various additional consonants, especially *t*, *r*, *tr* before the standard suffix. A detailed listing of nouns and their plurals can be found in the Caighdeán Oifigiúil, as well as in Carnie (2014).

16.1.4 Irregular plurals

The following plurals are irregular.

bean: mná	'woman'
dia: déithe	'god'
lá: laethanta	'day'
leaba: leapacha	'bed'
teach: tithe	'house'

Noun phrases and case

In addition to a noun (or pronoun) itself, noun phrases may contain other elements, including articles and other determiners, descriptive adjectives, other nouns qualifying the head (principal) noun that the phrase identifies, prepositional phrases, and sometimes also whole clauses. Each of these categories will be covered in more depth in later chapters. A few examples are provided here to illustrate the possible components of NPs.

Pronoun:	**sé, tú, muid, siad**
Noun:	**Séamas, Nuala, daoine, tithe**
Article + N:	**an duine, an carr, na daoine**
Possessor + N:	**mo chlann, ár gcairde, muintir Nuala**
N + Adjective:	**lá breá, Deirdre óg, baile mór**
N + PP:	**iasc san uisce, cuid de na daoine**
Article + N + adj:	**an oíche dheireanach, an buachaill óg**
Article + N + PP:	**na daoine sa rang, an leabhar ar an mbord**
Article + N + clause:	**na daoine atá anseo, an gasúir a bhí tinn**

Phrases of this sort can be found in all positions in a sentence. In certain instances, the form of a noun (and some of its accompanying elements) may change, according to its function in the sentence. These different functions and the forms associated with them are known as *case*. The marking of case on nouns will be described in the next sections, with the other elements of the phrase covered in later chapters (those in the section Grammar III).

16.2.1 Case in Irish: the genitive

Case marking on nouns signals the grammatical role each noun or noun phrase plays in a sentence. Since position in the sentence also indicates a noun's role with only rare ambiguity, many case forms of earlier Irish have disappeared in the contemporary language; in particular the cases known in other languages and in early Irish as *nominative* (marking subjects) and *accusative* (objects) are no longer distinguished in the form of the Irish noun. Now only a general case

form remains for both functions, known as the *common case* or *unmarked case*. This is the form of nouns serving as subject or object of a verb, in sentences with the copula, and after most prepositions, as well as for nouns used in isolation (including in dictionary entries). In contrast, a distinct *genitive* form remains productive to some degree in all dialects and indicates that the noun so marked possesses or is otherwise closely associated with a noun that immediately precedes it (e.g., *crois Bhríde*–'Brigid's cross'). The genitive case forms and their functions are the subject of this section.

Although the basic function of the genitive case is to show possession, it is also used in a wide range of related contexts, some of which are listed below.

Possession: **cóta Mháirín**   'Máirín's coat'
Part of a whole: **cos na leapa** 'the foot of the bed'
Group membership: **muintir na háite** 'people of the place, locals'
   lucht éisteachta 'listening people, audience'
After some prepositions: **timpeall an tí** 'around the house'
After nouns of quantity: **beagán airgid**   'a little bit of money'
After verbal nouns: **ag inseacht na fírinne**   'telling the truth'

It may be noted that verbal nouns like *éisteacht*, being nouns, also have genitive forms, as seen in the example *lucht éisteachta* above. Other examples include the following.

Ní ábhar magaidh é.	'It's no joking matter.'
Tá an féar chun bainte.	'The grass needs to be mowed.'
Tá mé i mbun na pacála.	'I'm in charge of the packing.'

Sequences of several nouns, in which each noun governs genitive case of the next, are not uncommon. In such instances, only the last of the sequence is genitive in form, although intermediate nouns may show lenition of consonants so affected.

Tháinig feabhas ar shaol mhuintir na háite.
   'The life of the people of the locality improved.'
i gclub Ridirí Naomh Cholumbáin…
   'in the club of the Knights of Columbus…'
Shiúil sí timpeall lár na cathrach.
   'She walked around the center of the city.'

Genitive case marking is as complex and varied as plural marking. Although the two have some features in common, there are many

differences. Traditional grammars such as the Christian Brothers' grammars and the CO organize nouns into five declension classes according to their genitive formation, providing extensive paradigms and even more extensive lists of subclasses and exceptions. Carnie (2014) takes a different approach, but his account still requires multiple subdivisions. The next section borrows from both in summarizing the primary case formation processes; for details not covered here, the reader is referred to these sources or to specific dialect monographs for particular regions.

16.2.2 Genitive case formation

All masculine nouns that form their common plural form by making a final consonant slender also form their genitive singular in the same way (including any accompanying vowel changes). These nouns dominate the traditional first declension class; they also have a genitive plural form that is identical to the common singular, as shown in Table 16.1. In addition, many masculine nouns with suffixed plurals also form their genitive singular with a sender consonant. Suffixed plurals remain the same in the genitive case (although mutations vary in some circumstances, to be described in Chapter 19).

Table 16.1 Genitive case: masculine nouns

	Common case	Genitive case	Gloss
Singular	bád	báid	'boat'
Plural	báid	bád	
Singular	fear	fir	'man'
Plural	fir	fear	
Singular	scéal	scéil	'story'
Plural	scéalta	scéalta	

The considerable dialect variation found in plural formation is less extreme for genitive formation. Many nouns with a plural formed by a slender consonant in the CO may use a suffix in some dialects, but will nevertheless form their genitive case by making the final consonant slender; this includes nouns ending in *(e)ach*, which have genitive *(a)igh*: e.g., *éadach*, gen. *éadaigh*.

The main genitive suffix for feminine nouns (and a very few masculine ones, like *im, sliabh*) is *-e*, accompanied by slenderizing a broad final consonant. This is characteristic of the traditional second declension. Feminine nouns ending in *(e)ach*, however, change this to *-(a)í* for the genitive singular. Vowel changes (similar to but more varied than those given above for plurals) may accompany the suffix. Examples of these regular forms are shown in Table 16.2.

Table 16.2 Genitive case: feminine nouns

Common case	Genitive case	Gloss
ím	íme	'butter'
maidin	maidine	'morning'
súil	súile	'eye'
fuinneog	fuinneoige	'window'
lámh	láimhe	'hand'
leabharlann	leabharlainne	'library'
gaoth	gaoithe	'wind'
báisteach	báistí	'rain'
scornach	scornaí	'throat'
scian	scine	'knife'
sliabh	sléibhe	'mountain'
beach	beiche	'bee'

In other nouns, pronunciation of the vowel may change (details vary considerably across dialects) although the spelling only reflects the slenderization of the consonant: *long*: *loinge*–'ship'; *clann*: *clainne*–'family.'

Genitive plurals of these nouns are not distinct from common case plurals, with the exception of a small group of nouns, which drop a final vowel of their common plural and broaden a slender consonant to form the genitive plural. This group includes the feminine nouns ending in *(e)ach*.

Table 16.3 Feminine genitive plural forms

Common sg.	Genitive sg.	Common pl.	Genitive pl.	Gloss
súil	súile	súile	súl	'eye'
cill	cille	cealla	ceall	'churchyard'
baintreach	baintrí	baintreacha	baintreach	'widow'
clann	clainne	clanna	clann	'family'

Another fairly large group of nouns, both masculine and feminine, does not change form in the genitive (the fourth declension in traditional grammars). This group includes most nouns ending in a vowel or in *-ín*. A few examples include *cailín* 'girl,' *fáinne* 'ring,' *balla* 'wall,' *pionta* 'pint,' *cluiche* 'game,' *cuisle* 'pulse,' *timpiste* 'accident,' *gloine* 'glass,' and many more. Like the preceding group, most also form their plurals with *-(a)í*.

Loss of an unstressed vowel may accompany the genitive suffix, as was the case in plural formation, making the genitive singular identical to the plural in a few words: *coinneal*: *coinnle* 'candle,' *foireann*: *foirne* 'team, crew.'

Similarly, the genitive of another group of nouns suffixes *-a*. This is pronounced much the same as the suffix *-e* just described, except that nouns forming their genitive this way end in a broad consonant, or

broaden a slender one when the suffix is added. These nouns constitute the traditional third declension.

Many nouns referring to professions end like one of the first three nouns in Table 16.4 and form their genitives similarly. Most nouns with this genitive also form their plurals with *(a)í*, but the genitive form cannot always be predicted from the plural.

Table 16.4 Genitives in *-a*

Common case	Genitive case	Gloss
táilliúr	táilliúra	'tailor'
siúnéir	siúnéara	'carpenter'
cainteoir	cainteora	'speaker'
rud	ruda	'thing'
gleann	gleanna	'glen'
buachaill	buachalla	'boy'
canúint	canúna	'dialect'
bagairt	bagartha	'threat'

The last two nouns on the table show that a final *t* may be omitted or lenited before the genitive suffix (except for nouns ending in *(e)acht*, as illustrated by *beannacht* in the table).

Finally, a few nouns (fifth declension traditionally) form the genitive by broadening a final consonant and often adding a suffix that may end in one of several consonants as well. They may be masculine or feminine. For example, several kinship terms form their genitives by broadening a final consonant, as in the first three examples on Table 16.5. The following nouns are also in this class: *bráthair* '(religious) brother,' *abhainn* 'river,' *teorainn* 'boundary, border,' *Nollaig* 'Christmas,' *namhaid* 'enemy,' and *bráid* 'throat.'

Table 16.5 Consonantal genitives

	Common case	Genitive case	Gloss
Broadening	athair	athar	'father'
	máthair	máthar	'mother'
	deartháir	dearthár	'brother'
Broadening plus *-ach*	caora	caorach	'sheep'
	siúr	siúrach	'(religious) sister'
	cáin	cánach	'tax'
	riail	rialach	'rule'
	traein	traenach	'train'
	coróin	corónach	'crown'
	cathair	cathrach	'city'
	meabhair	meabhrach	'mind'
Suffix *-n*	comharsa	comharsan	'neighbor'
	lacha	lachan	'duck'
	monarcha	monarchan	'factory'
	Éire	Éireann	'Ireland'
Suffix *-d*	cara	carad	'friend'
	fiche	fichead	'twenty'
	caoga	caogad	'fifty'

The most common of the consonantal suffixes is -*ach*, which may be accompanied by broadening of a slender consonant or the loss of a short vowel before the suffix, as has been seen in other forms. A few examples, both with and without syllable loss, are shown in Table 16.5. *Cathaoir* 'chair' and *litir* 'letter' are exceptional in not broadening their final consonants in the genitive: *cathaoireach*, *litreach*. The other two consonantal genitive suffixes are -*(a)n* and -*(e)ad*, each used for the genitive of about a dozen words, the most common of which are shown in the table. All other numbers ending in zero form their genitives with -*ad* as well.

Since verbal nouns are formally nouns, they too have genitive forms, which vary with the verbal noun. Many are similar in form to the verbal adjective forms described in Section 13.4, Chapter 13, but other genitive formation processes are also found. A few examples are given in Table 16.6.

Table 16.6 Genitives of verbal nouns

Common case	Genitive case	Gloss
pósadh	pósta	'marrying'
caint	cainte	'talking'
éirí	éirithe	'rising'
breathnú	breathnaithe	'looking'
suí	suite	'sitting'
imirt	imeartha	'playing'
tógáil	tógála	'building'
breith	breithe	'bearing, carrying'
siúl	siúil	'walking'

Genitive verbal nouns are frequently found in noun phrases such as the following: *fáinne pósta* 'wedding ring,' *páirc imeartha* 'playing field,' *seomra suite* 'sitting room,' as well as in the other genitive contexts mentioned above.

Despite the many classes and subclasses of nouns identified for genitive (and plural) formation, some irregular forms remain in even the most detailed analyses. These include several of the nouns with irregular plurals listed in Section 16.1.4 (and repeated here), which often resemble the genitives in some way. These irregular forms are shown in Table 16.7.

Table 16.7 Irregular genitives

Common case	Genitive case	Gloss
deirfiúr	deirféar	'sister'
deoch	dí	'drink'
dia	dé (cf. pl. **déithe**)	'god'
lá	lae (cf. pl. **laethanta**)	'day'
leaba	leapa (cf. pl. **leapacha**)	'bed'
mí	míosa	'month'

olann	olla	'wool'
talamh	talún	'land'
teach	tí	'house'

The irregular genitive form of *talamh* changes the noun's gender from masculine in the common case to feminine in the genitive. An alternative regular genitive also is in use in some areas, *talaimh,* in which case the noun remains masculine.

Finally, *bean*–'woman' is irregular throughout its paradigm; common singular: *bean*; common plural and genitive singular: *mná*; genitive plural: *ban.*

16.2.3 Vocative case

A *vocative* case survives in some names, and is used when addressing people directly (as opposed to referring to them as a third person). The vocative forms of names will be covered in Chapter 26. When common nouns (non-names) are used for direct address (e.g., *child, son, friends,* etc.), the singular form of the vocative is generally identical to the genitive case for first-declension nouns (masculine nouns with slender consonant in the genitive); for other nouns it is identical to the common case.

a linbh!	'child!'
a mhic!	'son!' (Used for any man.)
a dheirfiúr!	'sister!' (Used for any unnamed woman.)
a chailíní!	'girls!'
a chairde!	'friends!'
a dhaoine uaisle!	'noble people, i.e., ladies and gentlemen!'

First-declension nouns with slender plurals take -*a* in the vocative plural, e.g., *a fheara!* 'men!' Other plurals are not distinct in the vocative.

16.2.4 Dative case

In most dialects including the CO, the *dative* case forms, which were traditionally found in prepositional phrases, have fallen out of use, but a few vestiges remain. Some grammars continue to use the term *dative case* in talking about all nouns after prepositions, because of the mutations often found on nouns in prepositional contexts. This grammar does not do so, because the mutations are not consistent across dialects, nor across prepositions, and they vary also with other elements of the noun phrase. Instead, the mutations accompanying nouns in prepositional phrases will be treated as separate from case

marking; discussion of mutations associated with prepositions can be found in Chapter 22. This section describes the few surviving elements of dative case marking still in evidence.

Older dative forms are retained for just five nouns: *bos* 'palm of the hand,' *bróg* 'shoe,' *cluas* 'ear,' *cos* 'foot,' and *lámh* 'hand.' In each of these, the dative form consists of making the final consonant slender: *bois, bróig, cluais, cois, láimh*. All of the above nouns are feminine and form their genitive by making the final consonant slender and adding -*e*. In the Irish of parts of County Galway, the slender consonant has spread, taking over as the common form, which is now used in all contexts, including as subject and object. The same has occurred with the former dative form (no longer included in the CO) of nouns ending in *(e)óg*, producing Connacht citation forms like *spúnóig* 'spoon' and *fuinneoig* 'window,' where the standard and other dialects retain historical broad *g*. A few other words show the same tendency, at least optionally, to make a final broad consonant slender, both in Connacht and occasionally in other dialects.

The dative also survives in certain fixed phrases and idiomatic compounds, as in the following datives of *ceann*, *grian*, and *ciall*, which are not found outside fixed expressions of this type.

thar *cionn*	'excellent, terrific'
bun os *cionn*	'upside-down'
ag déanamh bolg-le-*gréin*	'sunbathing'
cur i *gcéill*	'deception, make-believe'

Tigh, the dative form of *teach* 'house,' is current also with the meaning 'at the home (or business) of.'

An bhfuil tú ag fanacht tigh Ghráinne?
  'Are you staying at Gráinne's?'
Ceannaím feoil tigh Chróinín.
  'I buy meat at Cróinín's [shop].'

Otherwise, dative forms surface mainly in proverbs and songs.

Obair ó *chrích*, obair bean tí.
  'Work without end is housewife's work.'
Tabhair do ghrá do do *mhnaoi*, agus do rún do do *dheirfír*.
  'Give your love to your *wife* and your secret to your *sister*.'
Muna bhfuil rud agat féin, déan do goradh le *gréin*.
  'If you have nothing yourself, warm yourself in the *sun*.'

Songs and poetry often date back more than a century (all but the first example below, from the 1970s, are cases in point) but they are still very much alive in the oral tradition, complete with archaic forms like the dative.

> …**cosúil le anamnacha bochta i** *bpéin* (*Cois na Trá* – Clannad) '…like poor souls in *pain*'
> **Cá mbíonn tú sa** *ló*? (*Droimeann Donn Dilis*)
> 'Where are you during the day?'
> **Cad as a dtabharfá do leabhar i** *mbréig*? (*An Droighneán Donn*)
> 'Why would you swear a *lie* on your book (the Bible)?'
> **Bhí an táilliúr gan** *chéill*… (*Bean an Fhir Rua*)
> 'The tailor was without *sense*…'
> **Ta an fuacht ag fáil tréise ar an** *ngréin*… (*Tomás Ó Dalaigh)*
> 'The cold is gaining power over the sun'
> **Thit mé laithreach i ngrá le** *mnaoi*… (*Máire Ní Eidhin*)
> 'I fell immediately in love with a *woman*…'

Perhaps the most salient of the historical dative forms is *-(a)ibh*, the dative plural suffix. It is no longer used colloquially, but may be encountered occasionally in poetic language. The songs of Antaine Raifteirí, a 19th-century Mayo poet who also composed the last three lines cited above, contain numerous examples.

> …**ag seinm ceoil do** *phócaibh* **falamh**   (*Mise Raftéirí*)
> '…playing music to empty *pockets*'
> **Tá a folt ag casadh léi síos go** *glúinibh*… (*Máire Standún*)
> 'Her hair is twisting down to her *knees*…'
> …**acht an méad do chuaidh go Spáin le** *scéalaibh* (*Dispute with the Bush*)
> '…except as many as went to Spain with *tidings*…'
> …**os mo chomhair ina** *míltibh*… (*Nansaí Bhreatnach*)
> '…before me in their *thousands*…'

The following examples of folk poetry also contain examples.

> …**chomh hard leis na** *fearaibh*… '…as high as [any other] *men*…'
> …**'is cuirfidh siad ruaig ar** *Ghallaibh*
> '…and they will put flight to the *foreigners*' (*Óró'Sé do Bheatha 'bhaile*)

The dative does survive in contemporary speech, however, in one word, the name for Ireland, which retains its distinctive dative form, *Éirinn*, after prepositions in all dialects.

Tá Éire in Eoraip.	'Ireland is in Europe.'
muintir na hÉireann	'the people of Ireland'
Tá Siobhán in Éirinn.	'Siobhán is in Ireland.'

As with the spread of the dative form to common case contexts for nouns like *cos/cois*, Connemara speakers tend to use the dative form optionally in subject and object position as well: *Tá Éirinn in Eoraip*.

Chapter 17

Pronouns

Several types of pronouns will be covered in this chapter. The most important and most widely encountered of these are the personal pronouns, which stand in place of people, places, or things that have been previously named in the discourse or are known from context (e.g., the speaker or hearer). Others, to be introduced below, include demonstrative, interrogative, and prepositional pronouns.

Personal pronouns

These refer to the speaker, listener, and any third parties referred to in the conversation, or any combination of these. The basic forms are in Table 17.1.

Table 17.1 Personal pronoun forms

	Singular	Plural
First-person	**mé** 'I, me'	**muid, sinn** 'we, us'
Second-person	**tú/thú** 'you'	**sibh** 'you' (pl.)
Third-person	**sé/é** 'he, him, it'	**siad/iad** 'they, them'

The neuter pronoun *ea*, used in answering certain questions with the copula, was introduced in Section 7.1.4, Chapter 7. Its use is distinct from that of the pronouns in this paradigm, but deserves mention here, since it is in fact a pronoun.

17.1.1 Alternate forms

Only *mé* and *sibh* are invariant, taking the same form in all varieties of Irish and all contexts; the other pronoun forms differ according to specific but differing criteria.

The choice between *muid* and *sinn* is primarily regional, although *sinn* is the older historical form and is still found in certain contexts (proverbs, fixed phrases) across all dialects. In ordinary usage, *sinn* is

still the form used in southern dialects, *muid* is the preferred form in Connacht, and both are used in Donegal, where Wagner (1979) identifies them as interchangeable.

Third-person pronouns all have forms with and without an initial *s*. The former only occur in the subject position immediately following a tensed verb.

Tá sí anseo.	'She is here.'
Chonaic siad mé.	'They saw me.'
Tuigeann sé Breatnais.	'He understands Welsh.'

The latter are used in all other positions, including as direct objects, objects of uninflected prepositions, and in verbless structures.

Chonaic mé iad.	'I saw them.'
Tiocfaidh Máirtín gan í.	'Máirtín will come without her.'
D'imigh sí gan é.	'She left without him.'
Siúd amach iad.	'Out they went/out with them.'

It might appear from the examples above that the distinction is simply one of subject versus object. However, the forms without *s* also appear in all copula sentences, even when they function as subjects.

Is sagart é.	'He is a priest.'
Is iad do chairde iad.	'They are your friends.'
Is í Cáit mo dheirfiúr.	'Cáit is my sister.'

They also can function as subjects when they don't follow a tensed verb in structures like the following (the first of which is further discussed in Chapter 23).

Bhí sí ag caint agus í ag obair.	'She was talking as she worked.'
Rachaidh Seán agus í go Corcaigh.	'Seán and she will go to Cork.'

The difference between *tú* and *thú* is roughly similar, but shows more variation. The only form found as subject of an inflected verb immediately preceding it is *tú*.

An mbeidh tú ann?	'Will you be there?'
Feicfidh tú ar ball iad.	'You'll see them soon.'

Tú is also the preferred form immediately following the copula *is* (unlike the third-person pronouns, which do not allow *se, sí, siad* in this position).

Is tú mo chara.	'You are my friend.'

The lenited form *thú* is usual in non-subject positions, with other forms of the copula and with *is* when other material intervenes, as in

the following.

Feicfidh mé amárach thú.	'I'll see you tomorrow.'
duine mar thú…	'a person like you…'
Ní thú mo bhean.	'You are not my wife.'
Is dlíodóir thú nach ea?	'You are a lawyer, aren't you?'

It is also used for emphasis after an imperative form.

Críochnaigh thusa é!	'You finish it!'

However, the unlenited form may also be found on occasion in these positions, usually when it follows a word ending in *n*, which blocks lenition of a *t*, *d*, or *s*.

Feicfidh mé am lóin tú.	'I'll see you at lunchtime.'
Tá sí uaigneach gan tú.	'She is lonely without you.'
Déan tú féin é!	'Do it yourself!'

17.1.2 Reflexive/reciprocal

Reflexive pronouns are identical in person to the subject of the clause, reflecting an action performed on oneself. Reflexivity in Irish is indicated by the addition of *féin* 'self' to the pronouns described above.

Ar ghortaigh tú thú féin?	'Did you hurt yourself?'
Ghearr Bairbre í féin.	'Bairbre cut herself.'
Níonn na gasúir iad féin.	'The children wash themselves.'

Reciprocity is indicated by the form *a chéile* 'each other.'

Gortóídh sibh a chéile.	'You'll hurt each other.'
Phóg siad a chéile.	'They kissed each other.'

17.1.3 Stressed/contrast forms

Traditionally, the personal pronouns described above are never pronounced with stress on the pronoun. If one wants to emphasize a pronoun, for example, to indicate a contrast with some other individual, the pronoun forms in Section 17.1.1 can be augmented by an additional syllable, which has the same effect as contrastive stress in English. The augmented forms are as follows.

mise
tusa/thusa
seisean/eisean
sise/ise

muidne, sinne
sibhse
siadsan/iadsan

These forms are used whenever one would put stress on an English pronoun (shown by italics below). They often establish a contrast between two individuals under discussion.

Ní mise a rinne é; rinne sise é.   '*I* didn't do it; *she* did it.'

Since cleft sentences (Chapter 8) often put focus on one element of the conversation in contrast with another (mentioned or implicit), pronouns in the focus position of cleft sentences usually take the augmented form.

Is tusa a bhí ann aréir.
'*You* were there last night.'

In conjoined phrases referring separately to two individuals, all pronominal forms are augmented either with these forms, or with *féin* (as described in the next section).

Tá seisean agus Caitríona anseo.   'He and Caitríona are here.'
Chuaigh mise agus ise chuig an léacht.   'She and I went to the lecture.'

Note the use of the form *ise* rather than *sise* in the second example. This is the required form for the second element of a conjoined phrase because, although functioning as a subject, it does not immediately follow the tensed verb.

17.1.4 Non-reflexive féin

In addition to its reflexive use shown in Section 17.1.2, *féin* 'self' can be used in non-reflexive contexts for a different sort of emphasis.

Rinne mé féin é. 'I did it myself.'
An dtiocfaidh tú féin agus Peige chun dinnéir?
   'Will you and Peige come to dinner?'

The two forms of augmentation may also be combined for further emphasis.

Bhí mise mé féin ann.   'I myself was there.'

The difference between augmentation with *féin* and with the suffixes is subtle and depends to a large degree on context and the speaker's

intentions. At times they may seem interchangeable. Study has shown, however, that the suffixes often serve to guide the hearer's attention between individuals already identified in the discourse, including the speaker and any listeners, as a kind of turn-taking device, or to highlight a contrast or parallel between them. *Féin*, on the other hand, can be used to draw attention to a new participant in the discourse or to emphasize particular characteristics or perspectives of the individual mentioned as opposed to that of the speaker or narrator. Detailed analysis of the differences between these forms can be found in Mulkern (2007).

17.1.5 Possessives

Pronouns used as possessors are placed before the noun they possess (as in English) in the determiner position (see Chapter 19). These are, like the basic forms of pronouns above, always unstressed and may have mutation effects on the following noun, as described in this section.

Basic forms of the possessive pronoun/determiners are shown below.

mo^L	'my'
do^L	'your'
a^L	'his'
a	'her'
ár^E	'our'
bhur^E	'your (pl.)'
a^E	'their'

Superscripts indicate the mutation that affects a following noun. The singular first-, second- and third-person masculine forms cause lenition of those consonants affected by the mutation; all three plural possessors cause eclipsis.

mo charr	'my car'
do theach	'your house'
a bhéile	'his meal'
ár gcarr	'our car'
bhur dteach	'your house'
a mbéile	'their meal'

Before vowels, *mo* and *do* elide their vowel.

m'athair	'my father'
d'iníon	'your daughter'

The plural (eclipsing) pronouns prefix *n-* (no hyphen before upper-case letters).

Ár nAthair	'Our Father'
bhur n-iníon	'your daughter'
a n-oifig	'their office'

The feminine possessor *a* does not affect a consonant, but prefixes *h* to a word beginning with a vowel; this gives minimal pairs like the following.

a mháthair	'his mother';	**a máthair**	'her mother'
a athair	'his father';	**a hathair**	'her father'

When the possessed noun is plural or represents a mass noun, it is usual to include the partitive quantifier *cuid* between the possessor and the noun, which then is in the genitive case. Examples of mass nouns so marked include: *mo chuid airgid* 'my money,' *do chuid gruaige* 'your hair,' *a cuid Gaeilge* 'her Irish,' *a chuid comhairle* 'his advice.' A few abstract nouns are best without *cuid*, e.g., *mo shláinte* 'my health,' *mo ghrá* 'my love,' and some can be used either with or without it, e.g., *m'eolas/mo chuid eolais* 'my knowledge.' In most cases, however, inclusion of *cuid* in expressing possession of mass nouns is most natural. With plural nouns, likewise, *cuid* is common when the number of items possessed is fairly large and precision is unimportant: *a chuid éadaí* 'his clothes,' *do chuid eochracha* 'your keys,' *a gcuid cairde*'their friends.' Body parts that come in pairs do not take *cuid* but often take the number *two*: *mo chluasa* 'my ears,' *mo dhá chois*'my feet,' while *cuid* is natural with other body parts: *a chuid putógaí*'his guts,' *mo chuid méaracha* 'my fingers.' With items generally owned in small numbers, *cuid* is less common, unless reference is to a larger quantity than average; *a charranna* 'his cars' would be likely in reference to the family cars, but *a chuid carranna* suggests the owner is a dealer or owns a garage with many cars on hand. On the whole, however, use of *cuid* is more frequent than its absence, with plurals as well as with mass nouns.

Because possessive determiners are never phonologically stressed, when one wants to emphasize one possessor over another, a suffix is added to the possessed noun for this purpose.

mo pháistese	'*my* child'
do pháistese	'*your* child'
a pháistesean	'*his* child'
a páistese	'*her* child'
ár bpáistene	'*our* child'
bhur bpáistese	'*your* child'
a bpáistesean	'*their* child'

Following a broad consonant (or vowel), the suffixes are *-sa, -san, -na,* respectively.

mo charrsa	'*my* car'
a charrsa	'*his* car'
a gcarrsan	'*their* car'
ár gcarrna	'*our* car,' etc.

In cases where an ambiguity as to possessor might arise, as when plural possessors are pronounced indistinctly as *a* (common in Connacht dialects), or when a noun following a possessive *a* begins with a consonant not subject to mutation, a pronoun can be used to distinguish possessors.

a leabhar seisean	'*his* book'
a leabhar sise	'*her* book'
a leabhar siadsan	'*their* book'
ár leabhar muidne	'*our* book'

This is the only context where the pronouns *seisean, sise, siadsan* can appear not following an inflected verb. However, in this case, of course, they do not translate as the simple pronouns *he, she, they,* but rather as possessors.

The reflexive *féin* can appear in possessive phrases, where it has the meaning *own*: *do theach féin* 'your own house.'

Finally, possession may be expressed in a few instances with prepositions introducing the owner (see Chapter 22 for a full exposition of prepositions and their use). This usage is particularly common in referring to people who have a relationship to the possessor that might not be exclusive (there could be more than one such relative): *iníon le Tony Chóilín* 'Tony Chóilín's daughter, a daughter of Tony Chóilin,' *uncail liomsa* 'an uncle of mine.' Either *le* (as above) or *do* may be used in these structures. For members of one's own family, when the whole family is intended as the possessor, the phrase *seo againne* (a form of *ag*, cf. Chapter 22) is used: *Pádraig seo againne* 'our Pádraig.'

Demonstrative pronouns

The simple forms of personal pronouns also combine with the demonstrative elements *seo, sin, siúd* to create demonstrative pronouns. These can be used to refer to individuals previously mentioned or evident from context.

Is fearr liom é seo ná é sin.	'I prefer this to that.'
Feicfidh mé í sin inniu.	'I'll see her (that female) today.'
Ní raibh siad siúd anseo cheana.	'Those people weren't here before.'

Where English has only two demonstratives, *this/these* or *that/those*, Irish has three. Gender and plurality are expressed only in the pronoun forms; the demonstratives themselves are unmarked for gender or number. *Seo* refers to a person or object that is relatively near the speaker, *sin* to one that is away from the speaker and perhaps closer to the listener, and *siúd* to an individual at some remove from either. The terms *proximal*, *medial*, and *distal* are sometimes used to refer to them each, respectively. The actual distance involved is not readily measured and is more conceptual than physical (e.g., the reference could also be to distance in time), so there is some interchangeability among the forms. Listening to speakers and observing written usage is the best way to gain a feel for how the forms are used.

Interrogative pronouns

Interrogative pronouns, used with indefinite reference in questions, were introduced briefly in Chapter 6. They are listed below.

cé?	'who?'
cad? céard? goidé?	'what?'
cé acu? (also **ciaca?**)	'which (one)?'

The difference in the choice of word for *what*? is regional. *Cad* is typical in the dialects of Munster (and also used in the CO), *céard* is more common in Connacht, and *goidé* (from *cad é*) is the preferred form in Donegal and other Ulster communities. All question words may introduce an interrogative sentence, as below (see Chapter 24 for full details on the structure of these sentences).

Cé a dúirt é sin?	'Who said that?'
Cad/Céard/Goidé a dúirt tú?	'What did you say?'
Cé acu is fearr leat?	'Which (one) do you prefer?'

Cé acu/Ciaca may also be followed by a noun for more precision.

Ciaca leabhar is fearr leat?	'Which book do you prefer?'

Sometimes interrogative pronouns stand alone, as a means of questioning or verifying what was said if it was not heard accurately or sufficiently specified.

Thóg sí ceann de na leabhartha.	
-Cé acu?	
Fuair mé ceann (umhlaidh) uaidh.	
-Céard?	

Cé 'who' does not stand alone, but must be combined with a noun, in which case it merges with the definite article *an* (Chapter 19) as *cén*.

Chonaic mé é (unclear).
'Cén duine? which person?')

Likewise, *cá* 'where' does not stand alone. Instead, *cén áit* is used.

Feicfidh mé amárach thú.
'Cén áit?

Ceann

Ceann, literally 'head,' is used as a pronominal form that makes it possible to avoid constant repetition of a noun, much as *one* is used in English.

Tabhair dom an ceann beag.   'Give me the small one.'

Ceann can also stand in for specific nouns after other determiners.

Tá cúpla leabhar anseo. Ar mhaith leat an ceann seo nó an ceann eile?   'There are a couple of books here. Would you like this one or the other?'
Seo é mo theach agus sin é a cheannsa.   'This is my house and that is his.'

As illustrated by the last example, use of *ceann* is the standard for expressing the possessive pronouns *mine, yours, ours,* etc. when the noun referred to is countable (e.g., cars, chairs, houses, etc.): *mo cheann* 'mine,' *do cheann* 'yours,' *a ceann* 'hers,' *ár gceann* 'ours,' *bhur gceann* 'yours', *a gceann* 'theirs.' For plurals or mass nouns (e.g., keys, food, coffee, etc.), *cuid* is used: *mo chuid* 'mine,' *a gcuid* 'theirs,' etc.

Ceann is used similarly with numbers, as will be described in Chapter 20.

Pronominal inflections

Chapter 11 presented verb forms with personal endings, such as *tuigim* 'I understand.' These inflections serve the same function as subject pronouns. Many prepositions are also inflected for pronoun objects, in phrases such as *with me, from them,* etc. Such forms are sometimes known as *prepositional pronouns.* They are covered in detail in Chapter

22.

Building the phrase

Modifiers and adjuncts

Many sentences contain far more than the nouns and verbs discussed in the previous section. Additional descriptive material is often added to nouns or verbs to further identify the events and the individuals participating in them. Because this material is not required for a complete sentence in the way that subjects, verbs, and (sometimes) objects are, the term *adjunct* is used to refer to it. Adjuncts are often said to modify the noun or verb (the *head* of the phrase) with which they are associated. This section deals with the grammar of these elements.

Adjectives

Adjectives are the descriptive words that help identify the referent of a particular noun by specifying some of its attributes (e.g., *the small red car*, as opposed to just any car). Adjectives may function as predicates in their own right (what is being said about the noun) or attributively as part of a noun phrase, as in the example just given. This chapter will begin with the predicative use, and follow with the grammar of attributive adjectives.

Predicate adjectives

Most predicate adjectives occur as complements of *bí*, which can be in any tense.

Beidh tú tuirseach amárach.	'You will be tired tomorrow.'
Bhí Séamas sásta.	'Séamas was satisfied.'
Tá Caitlín sean.	'Caitlín is old.'
Bíonn na páistí tinn go minic.	'The children are often sick.'

The predicate adjective does not show agreement with the subject of which it is predicated, but is invariant. Thus, the adjectives above do not change if the subject of *bí* is of a different number (*Beidh sibh tuirseach, Bíonn an páiste tinn go minic*) or gender (*Bhí Áine sásta, Tá Tomás sean*).

18.1.1 Evaluative adjectives

As was mentioned in Chapter 7, members of a small set of adjectives (mostly expressing evaluations) are usually preceded by *go* when used as predicates, although there is some dialect variation. Typical examples include the following.

Tá an lá go breá.	'The day is fine.'

Tá an aimsir go dona.	'The weather is bad.'
Tá an bia go maith.	'The food is good.'
Tá d'iníon go hálainn.	'Your daughter is beautiful.'

For the full list of such adjectives, see Section 7.2.2, Chapter 7.

When the predicate adjective is further modified by an adverb or adverbial prefix, *go* is generally omitted.

Tá an lá réasúnta breá.	'The day is reasonably fine.'
Tá an aimsir ródhona.	'The weather is too bad.'
Tá an bia iontach maith.	'The food is excellent (wonderfully good).'
Tá d'iníon rí-álainn.	'Your daughter is very, very beautiful.'

The intensifier *an* 'very,' however, occurs both with and without *go*.

Tá an bia an-mhaith.	'The food is very good.'
Tá an bia go han-mhaith	

18.1.2 Adjective predicates of the copula

In some cases, an older syntax, in which the adjective is a predicate of the copula, *is* instead of *tá*, is found. One such case was presented in Chapter 7, the use of the structure adjective-*an*-noun for emphasis or focus on the adjective within the phrase. For example:

Is deas an duine é.	'He's a nice person.'

The adjective may also be found alone with the copula on occasion, particularly in the case of adjectives that take a complement clause (see Chapter 23).

(Is) maith thú!	'Good for you!'
Is deacair é sin a thuiscint.	'It's difficult to understand that.'
Is cosúil go raibh báisteach ann.	'It seems that there was rain.'

Attributive adjectives

When adjectives are used attributively within a noun phrase, they usually follow the noun (*teach bán, páiste óg, fear mór*, etc.) and agree with the head noun for gender, number, and case, as described next.

18.2.1 Gender

Adjectives use initial mutations to show gender agreement. Specifically, an attributive adjective following a singular feminine noun is marked by lenition of its first consonant. The contrast between

adjectives in masculine and feminine NPs is illustrated below.

fear mór	'a big man'	**bean mhór**	'a big woman'
teach beag	'a small house'	**tine bheag**	'a small fire'
lá deas	'a nice day'	**oíche dheas**	'a nice night'
bia maith	'good food'	**deoch mhaith**	'a good drink'
sneachta trom	'heavy snow'	**báisteach throm**	'heavy rain'
seomra salach	'a dirty room'	**cistin shalach**	'a dirty kitchen'

18.2.2 Number

Number agreement appears as a suffix on the adjective. In the common form, singular nouns and adjectives are unmarked (apart from lenition after feminine nouns), but following a plural noun, an adjective ends in *-a* or *-e,* depending on whether the final consonant of the singular is broad or slender. Plural versions of some of the phrases above illustrate.

tithe beaga	'small houses'
laethanta deasa	'nice days'
cistinacha salacha	'dirty kitchens'
mná móra	'big women'
leapacha maithe	'good beds'

Notice that the initial consonant of plural adjectives is not lenited even after feminine nouns. However, if the noun plural ends in a slender consonant, the adjective shows lenition. This has nothing to do with gender (except that most such nouns – but not quite all – happen to be masculine).

fir mhóra	'big men'
báid mhaithe	'good boats'

18.2.3 Case

The genitive marking of adjectives varies with gender and number. Starting with the singular forms, initial consonants of genitive adjectives following masculine nouns are lenited and a final broad consonant becomes slender; slender consonants remain unchanged.

an fear maith	'the good man'
teach an fhir mhaith	'the good man's house'
an fear mór	'the big man'
teach an fhir mhóir	'the big man's house'

When the noun is feminine, the genitive singular form of the adjective is identical to the comparative form. The most common genitive singular form adds the suffix *-e,* in addition to making a broad

consonant slender. The genitive adjective is not lenited.

an bhean mhaith	'the good woman'
teach na mná maithe	'the good woman's house'
an bhean mhóir	'the big woman'
teach na mná móire	'the big woman's house'

There are numerous subcategories of adjectives with varying feminine forms. Since adjectives are relatively rare in the genitive and more frequent in comparative forms, further details are left to Section 18.3. The only difference between comparative and genitive feminine forms is that the irregular comparative forms given in that section are treated regularly as genitives (as the example with *maith* above illustrates; genitive feminine *maithe,* but an irregular comparative form, described below).

Genitive plural forms are identical to the common plurals described in Section 18.2.2. No mutations affect the initial consonants of plural adjectives.

18.2.4 Prenominal adjectives

A few attributive adjectives are placed before the noun and act like prefixes, being written as one word with the noun and leniting the noun's initial consonant where lenition is possible. The most common of these is *sean*'old'; *seanfhear* 'an old man,' *seanbhean*'an old woman.'

The prefixed *sean-* does not lenite a following *t, d, s: seanteach*– 'an old house.' As a predicate adjective, *sean* is used exactly like any other adjective, as shown in examples of Section 18.1.

Fíor'true' can also be prefixed to a noun in occasional attributive usage or function as an ordinary predicate adjective. It may also have adverbial meaning of *very, really* before an adjective (see Section 21.4, Chapter 21 for further examples).

fíorDhia ó fhíorDhia…	'true God of true God…'
Bhí fíorcharanacht iontu.	'They had true friendship.'
Bhí an áit fíorbhrocach.	'The place was really dirty.'

Others occur only as prefixes and are never used predicatively. *Droch*- is the attributive equivalent of the predicate adjective *dona* for most speakers.

Bhí an aimsir go dona.	'The weather was bad.'
Bhí drochaimsir againn.	'We had bad weather.'

Similarly, *dea-* is a prefix equivalent to *deas*, although *deas* can follow the noun it modifies as well, whereas *dona* generally does not.

dea-lá	'a nice day'
lá deas	

Another prefixed-only form, which does not occur predicatively, is *corr*'odd, occasional.'

Ní fhaca mé ach corrdhuine.	'I only saw the odd person.'
Itheann sé iasc, sicín agus corrphíosa feola.	'He eats fish, chicken, and an occasional piece of meat.'

A number of other prefixes more often function adverbially (as do some of the above) and will be introduced in Chapter 21.

Comparison of adjectives

Comparison of adjectives is doubly marked, by both a suffix and a word translatable as *more*. The superlative degree has the same form as the comparative, but with a different syntactic structure (see Section 18.3.4).

18.3.1 Comparative formation

The comparative degree of an adjective is preceded by the adverbial particle *níos*–'more' and also has a comparative suffix. The most common of these is *-e*, which also makes a preceding broad consonant slender (marked as usual in spelling by the vowel *i*). The vowel written *ea* (/a/ following a slender consonant) changes with the addition of this suffix to *ei* (/e/) or *i* (/i/). The comparative of *gearr*'short' changes the vowel, but does not change the final consonant. It is sometimes treated as irregular for this reason: *gearr*: *giorra* 'short.' Adjectives of two syllables lose the second (short) vowel when the comparative suffix is added.

Table 18.1 Comparative forms of adjectives

	Adjective"	Comparative	Gloss
Suffix only	ciúin	ciúine	'quiet'
	glic	glice	'clever, sly'
Suffix + slenderizing	óg	óige	'young'
	bán	báine	'white'
	trom	troime	'heavy'
	ard	airde	'high'
	fuar	fuaire	'cold'
	daor	daoire	'expensive'
+ vowel change	deas	deise	'nice'

	dearg	deirge	'red'
	geal	gile	'bright'
	sean	sine	'old'
+ vowel loss	ramhar	raimhre	'fat'
	iseal	isle	'low'
	saibhir	saibhre	'rich'
	domhain	doimhne	'deep'
all processes	leathan	leithne	'wide'

Adjectives ending in *-úil* broaden the final *l* and add the suffix *-a*. The pronunciation of the suffix is the same as the pronunciation of the suffix *-e* above; only the spelling differs because of the change in consonant quality. Examples include *suimiúil*: *níos suimiúla* 'interesting,' *dathúil*: *níos dathúla* 'handsome,' *cosúil*: *níos cosúla* 'similar.'

Similarly, *cóir* 'right' broadens the final *r* and adds *-a*: *níos córa*, and with syllable loss, *deacair*: *níos deacra* 'difficult', *socair*: *níos socra* 'quiet, calm' also fit this pattern.

Adjectives ending in *-(e)ach* form their comparatives by changing *(e)ach* to *(a)í*, as in *salach*: *níos salaí* 'dirty,' *díreach*: *níos dírí* 'direct,' *aisteach*: *níos aistí* 'strange, odd,' and *compórdach*: *níos compórdaí* 'comfortable.'

Those ending in *íoch* change to *íche*: *buíoch*: *níos buíche* 'grateful,' *imníoch*: *níos imníche* 'worried.'

Adjectives with a final vowel usually do not change form.

níos blasta	'tasty'
níos casta	'twisted, complicated'
níos dorcha	'dark'

It should be recalled that these regular comparative formations also serve as the genitive form of adjectives modifying feminine nouns.

The following have irregular comparative forms.

Table 18.2 Irregular comparatives

Adjective	Comparative:níos ±	Gloss
maith	fearr	'good'
breá	breátha	'fine'
furasta	fusa	'easy'
fada	faide	'far, long'
te	teo	'hot'
álainn	áille	'beautiful'
dócha	dóichí	'likely, probable'
dona/olc	measa	'bad, evil'
mór	mó	'big'
beag	lú	'small'

| iomaí | lia | 'numerous, many' |

18.3.2 Variant forms

The previous section presented the official standard forms of the CO, which are in widespread use, but there is considerable variation across dialects and even on occasion within a dialect. In Connemara, for example, a more regular comparative form of *beag* 'small,' *níos beige*, is found, alongside the more common *níos lú*. Similarly, *níos dona* coexists with *níos measa* and *níos furasta* with *níos fusa*. Connemara Irish also uses a slightly irregular form, *níos minicí*, in place of *níos minice*.

Cross-dialect variation is also found, sometimes in alternation with Caighdeán forms. In Connacht, a number of monosyllabic comparatives add a syllable *-cha* to monosyllabic adjectives ending in a vowel, as well as to the disyllabic *tanaí*: *níos tanaíocha* 'thin' (also attested in Munster).

Some others include: *breá*: *níos breácha* 'fine,' *tiubh*: *níos tiúcha* 'thick,' *buí*: *níos buíocha* 'yellow,' *beo*: *níos beocha* 'lively,' *te*: *níos teocha* 'hot.' Less frequently one may find *-chte* instead: *níos bhoichte, níos beoichte, níos breáichte* (also found in parts of Ulster), etc. *Níos teochta* is found in North Connacht (e.g., Mayo).

Irregular Munster comparatives include the following: *fada*: *níos sia* (also *níos faide*) 'far,' *láidir*: *níos tréise* 'strong.' Further, in parts of Munster, irregular superlatives (see below) may be lenited: *an áit is shia* 'the farthest place,' *an duine is thréise* 'the strongest person,' etc.

Ulster has its own irregular form for comparative/superlative of *te*–'hot,' *níos teithe*, which is used alongside standard *níos teo*.

Each dialect region has its own irregular form of *gránna* 'ugly': *níos gráice* (U), *níos gráinne* (C), *níos gráinge* (M).

18.3.3 Comparative syntax

The object of comparison is introduced by *ná* 'than.' Use of comparatives in sentences is exemplified below. *Bí*, the verb of existence, is normally found with predicative comparatives as in the first example below, but the copula *is* can be used as well (without *níos*), reflecting an older structure still in existence but somewhat less

widely used today. It is particularly popular in proverbs, like the third example below.

Tá Níamh níos óige ná Eoghan.
  'Niamh is younger than Eoghan.'
Ní fheicfidh tú áit níos deise ná an áit seo.
  'You won't see a nicer place than this.'
Is fearr Gaeilge bhriste ná Béarla cliste.
  'Better broken Irish than clever English.'

In the past tenses (and conditional), *níos* is replaced by *níb* before a vowel and *ní ba* before a consonant; the first consonant of the adjective is lenited. When the copula introduces a past comparative form, the past/conditional *ba* is used.

Bhí a máthair ní b'áille ná ise.
  'Her mother is more beautiful than she is.'
Bhí an gadaí ní ba ghlice ná na gardaí.
  'The thief was cleverer than the police.'
Ba bhreátha an lá inniu ná an lá inné.
  'Today was finer than yesterday.'
Bhí Pádraig ní ba shine ná ceachtar acu.
  'Pádraig was older than either of them.'

In contemporary colloquial usage, *níos* is sometimes found even in the past tenses, but *ní ba/ní b'* is still considered officially correct.

When the standard of comparison is a clause, it takes the form of a relative clause (Chapter 24), introduced by optional *mar* 'as.'

Tá sé níos fuaire i mbliana ná mar a bhí sé anuraidh.
  'It is colder this year than it was last year.'

18.3.4 Superlative structures

The same forms are used for the superlative degree of comparison, but are introduced by the copula *is*.

an cailín is áille	'the most beautiful girl'
an teach is mó	'the biggest house'
an carr is daoire	'the most expensive car'
an duine is cliste	'the cleverest person'
an lá is fuaire	'the coldest day'

Literally, these translate as *the girl that is most beautiful*, *the house that is biggest*, etc. The superlative is generally used only in attributive position, that is, following a noun. That is, sentences like *You're the best* are avoided, with preference given to *You're the best person/ student/friend/one*, etc.

Tusa an fear is fearr.	'You are the best man.'

18.3.5 Equative structures

To express equality of a characteristic, the phrase *chomh…le…* is used along with the ordinary simple form of the adjective. *Chomh* prefixes *h* to a vowel.

Tá Seán chomh hard le Brian.	'Seán is as tall as Brian.'
Níl tú chomh sean liomsa.	'You are not as old as I am.'
Chonaic mé teach chomh mór le caisleán.	
'I saw a house as big as a castle.'	

To use a full sentence for the point of comparison, a relative clause introduced by *'is a* must be used (see Chapter 24 for details of relative clause formation). This is a contracted form of *agus a*, which is also sometimes heard.

> **Níl sé chomh fuar i mbliana 'is a bhí sé anuraidh.**
'It is not as cold this year as it was last year.'
> **Rith Séamas chomh sciobtha agus a bhí sé in ann.**
'Séamas ran as fast as he was able.'

The point of comparison can be omitted, replaced by *sin* or *seo*.

Níl sé chomh fuar sin.	'It's not that cold.'

Other adjective-like forms

In many grammars, the possessive pronoun forms, demonstratives, and various expressions of quantity are identified as adjectives as well. They are not so treated here, but will be covered in the next chapter, as determiners.

Determiners

Determiners are grammatical elements within a noun phrase that help to limit the potential referent of that phrase. They signal assumptions that the speaker makes about the listener's knowledge of the individual the noun refers to as well as about the specificity the speaker intends. Determiners include articles, demonstratives, pronominal possessors, and words denoting quantities. Most of these precede the noun in Irish and are unstressed, but a few determiner-like elements that follow the noun will also be discussed in this chapter.

Articles

Articles help signal whether the speaker has a specific individual in mind in using the noun and thinks the listener can also identify the referent or not. In English articles may be indefinite (no assumption that the listener can identify a particular individual named by the noun) or definite (the speaker has a specific individual in mind and thinks the listener can identify who or what that individual is). Irish uses only definite articles, although some indefinite phrases can be further limited with determiners.

19.1.1 Indefinite articles and determiners

The indefinite article of English is *a* or *an.* There is no Irish equivalent. Instead, a bare noun is used. Thus, a word like *crann* can mean both *tree* and *a tree*, depending on the context. In sentences, *a tree* is the likely translation.

Tá crann thall ansin.	'There's a tree over there.'

The phrase *a tree* is, by itself, somewhat ambiguous. The speaker may or may not have a particular tree in mind. In other words, the phrase may have a specific or non-specific reference. Context usually removes

the ambiguity, but not always. In the sentence *Sinéad wants to marry a German*, the speaker may know of a particular German that Sinéad wants to marry, or it may be the case that Sinéad just likes Germans and therefore wants to marry one, but hasn't yet identified a potential spouse. The speaker may know which meaning is intended but in using *a/an* is expressing an assumption that the listener doesn't know, or that it doesn't matter. The same is true of Irish:

Tá Sinéad ag iarraidh Gearmánach a phósadh.
 'Sinéad wants to marry a German.'

If a speaker wishes to be more precise about whether or not the German in question is a specific individual or not, it is possible to show the distinction with a following *áirithe* 'certain, particular' or *éigin* (also *eicín(t)*) 'some.'

Gearmánach áirithe	'a certain German'
Gearmánach éigin	'some German (or other)'

Normally, this specification is not necessary to a conversation, but the option is available if needed.

19.1.2 Definite articles

The definite article *an* 'the' is used very similarly (not identically) to its English counterpart, but it has two forms. *An* is used with all singular forms of masculine nouns and the common form of feminine nouns, while *na* is the form used before all plural nouns and also with the genitive of singular feminine nouns.

an fear	'the man'
na fir	'the men'
cóta an fhir	'the man's coat'
an oifig	'the office'
;na hoifigí	'the offices'
doras na hoifige	'the door of the office/the office door'

As the above examples also show, *na* prefixes *h* to an initial vowel of the noun following it in all cases except the genitive plural. This is true regardless of gender; *na húllaí* 'the apples' is masculine but marked identically to *na hoifigí*. No consonant mutations follow *na*, except in the genitive plural, discussed below.

Mutations associated with case forms of nouns depend on both the case function and the presence of the article. In other words, lenition of the *f* in *fir* above is triggered by the presence of the article *and* the

genitive case (although the form of the article itself does not change in the genitive). Without that article present, there is no lenition: *cóta fir* 'a man's coat'; likewise, *na fir* 'the men' shows no lenition when the phrase is not genitive. In the genitive plural with an article present, the mutation associated with the article *na* is eclipsis in both genders (*n-* prefixed to a vowel).

cótaí na bhfear	'the men's coats'
doirse na n-oifigí	'the doors of the offices'

Notice that even when the English translation has two occurrences of *the, an/na* appears only once, before the genitive noun. Possessor (genitive) forms never co-occur with an article on the possessed noun. The specific possessor alone is sufficient to mark the noun as definite.

Mutations after the singular article *an* do not affect nouns beginning with *t, d*, or *s*, all consonants that are formed with the tongue in the same position of the mouth as for the articulation of *n.* This identity of tongue position blocks mutation, even in the case of the contractions *sa* and *sna* 'in the.' Although they do not themselves end with *n*, they are reduced versions of phrases that do, and it is the full phrase that determines the (non-) mutation. The same effect is found after other determiners, such as *aon* 'one, any' and *céad* 'first': *aon fhuinneog* 'any window' but *aon doras* 'any door'; *an chéad fhuinneog* 'the first window' but *an chéad doras* 'the first door.'

Instead of lenition of *s* to *sh*, however, presence of the article causes prefixation of a *t* to feminine nouns beginning with *s*, in the common case form (both as subjects or objects and in prepositional phrases), and to masculine nouns in the genitive case, where regular lenition of other nouns is found.

Tá an tsráid leathan.	'The street is wide.'
Tá mé i mo chónaí ar an tsráid seo.	'I live on this street.'
Sin é teach an tsagairt.	'That is the priest's house.'

Masculine nouns beginning with a vowel have *t-* prefixed following the article in subject and object position.

	Tá an t-úll seo blasta.	'This apple is tasty.'
	Cheannaigh an t-úll anseo!	'Buy the apple here!'
But	**blas an úill**	'the taste of the apple'
	leis an úll	'with the apple'

19.1.3 Uses of the article

On the whole, the Irish article is used similarly to English *the*. Some differences, however, are worth noting. The article in Irish is used in a number of contexts where *the* is not, and it is also omitted in a few contexts where an English speaker might expect it.

Many place names include the article in Irish, including most countries and continents, with the exception of *Sasana* 'England,' *Meiriceá* 'America,' and a handful of others. Some city names use the article, but most do not. Bodies of water and mountains vary.

Téann siad go dtí an Fhrainc gach samhradh.
  'They go to France every summer.'
Deirtear go bhfuil an tSeapáin go hálainn.
  'They say that Japan is beautiful.'
Tá an Ghréig san Eoraip.
  'Greece is in Europe.'
Tá an Róimh san Iodáil.
  'Rome is in Italy.'

Éire, *Albain*, and *Gaillimh* are preceded by a definite article in the genitive case but not otherwise.

Is maith liom Éire.	'I like Ireland.'
Is maith liom Albain.	'I like Scotland.'
Is maith liom Gaillimh.	'I like Galway.'
Tá sí in Éirinn.	'She is in Ireland.'
Tá sí in Albain.	'She is in Scotland.'
Tá sí i nGaillimh.	'She is in Galway.'
muintir na hÉireann	'the people of Ireland'
muintir na hAlban	'the people of Scotland'
muintir na Gaillimhe	'the people of Galway'

Certain formal titles including the name *Éireann* also omit the article, e.g., *Dáil Éireann* 'the Parliament of Ireland, the Irish Parliament.' However, personal titles include it: *an tAthair Ó Ceallaigh* 'Father Kelly,' *an Dochtúir Ó Murchú* 'Doctor Ó Murchú.'

A number of calendar terms also require the article, including names of certain holidays, seasons, some months, and weekdays (when not used adverbially, preceded by *Dé*).

Tiocfaidh an Cháisc go luath i mbliana.
    'Easter will come early this year.
An beidh tú anseo roimh an Nollaig?
    'Will you be here before Christmas?'
Bíonn an samhradh róthe ansin.

  'Summer is too hot there.'
mí na Samhna/an Samhain
  'November'
mí (na) Bealtaine/an Bhealtaine
  'May'
an Luan, an Mháirt, an Chéadaoin
  'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday'
But **Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Céadaoin**

Many abstract nouns can be used without an article in English but always take *an* in Irish: *an tionscal* 'industry,' *an aois* 'age,' *an tsláinte* 'health,' *an Gaelachas* 'Irishness,' *an cheimic* 'chemistry,' *an stair* 'history,' etc.

In contrast, the article may be omitted in Irish in contexts where it would be used in English. As noted above, the article never precedes a possessed noun: *muintir na háite seo* 'the people of this place.' It is also omitted in various phrases where the English equivalent would include *the*: e.g., *lán go béal* 'full to the brim.'

Demonstratives

Demonstrative determiners are used to signal that a noun refers to a particular individual, identifiable from the surrounding physical environment or from earlier mention in the conversation. In English the demonstrative determiners are *this*, *these*, *that*, and *those*, the first two referring to individuals relatively near the speaker and the latter two to ones at some greater distance. Irish has three forms, which co-occur with the definite article and follow the noun. The forms of the article and noun establish number; the demonstrative itself does not change in the plural.

an teach seo	'this house'
na tithe seo	'these houses'
an teach sin	'that house'
na tithe sin	'those houses'
an teach úd	'that house yonder'
na tithe úd	'yonder houses'

While *seo* and *sin* function quite similarly to English *this* and *that*, *úd* generally refers to a person or thing at some greater distance from both speaker and hearer. It can be translated, if somewhat quaintly, by *yon*, *yonder*, or by *that one over there*.

Demonstrative *seo* can be used to introduce a new individual to the conversation, as in *I want you to meet this woman I met last week; you'd*

find her very interesting. Sin and occasionally *úd* are used to refer to something or someone mentioned earlier in the discourse.

Pronominal possessives

When a possessor of a noun is a pronoun, it appears in the phrase as a determiner, unstressed and preceding the noun, rather than in the second position shown in Section 19.1.2 for full genitive noun phrases. The pronominal possessors and the mutations they trigger on the possessed noun were presented in Chapter 17, and are reviewed briefly here with examples.

mo pháiste	'my child'
do pháiste	'your child'
a pháiste	'his child'
a páiste	'her child'
ár bpáiste	'our child'
bhur bpáiste	'your (pl.) child'
a bpáiste	'their child'

To summarize, the plural possessors cause eclipsis on the following noun, and the singular possessors (except for *a* 'her') cause lenition. Notice that, although all the third-person possessors are identical in spelling and pronunciation, they are distinguished by the mutation on the following noun. Feminine *a* 'her' does not cause lenition of a following consonant, but it does prefix *h* to a vowel. The plural possessors prefix *n* to a vowel, and the other singular forms cause no change.

a iníon	'his daughter'
a hiníon	'her daughter'
a n-iníon	'their daughter'

To identify one of multiple relatives of the same relation, prepositional phrases (see Chapter 22) with *do* or *le* are used.

iníon le Diarmaid	'a daugher of Diarmaid's, Diarmaid's daughter'
uncail liom/dom	'an uncle of mine, my uncle'

Quantifiers

A variety of words referring to quantities also function as determiners within NPs. Most precede the noun in the same position as articles and pronominal possessors, but a few follow. They are on the whole rather a mixed bag of elements from a syntactic point of view. Many of these

forms are treated as adjectives in traditional grammars, although they cannot be declined or compared like the adjectives discussed in Chapter 18. Because of their morphological differences from attributive adjectives, and their syntactic behavior, they are here considered part of the determiner system.

19.4.1 Prenominal quantifiers

The following are among the most frequent of the quantifiers that precede the noun in determiner position. *Gach* 'each, every':

> **Bhí gach múinteoir ann.**   'Every teacher was there.'

'chuile 'every.' A contraction of the phrase *gach uile, 'chuile* causes lenition of a following consonant:

> **Bhí 'chuile mhúinteoir ann.**   'Every teacher was there.'

Go leor, neart, a lán 'many, much, a lot':

> **Feicim go leor madraí.**   'I see many dogs.'
> **Tá a lán daoine ann.**   'There are many people there.'
> **Chuala muid neart amhráin.**   'We heard many songs.'

These can be used more or less interchangeably. They can also be used to quantify mass nouns. A singular mass noun takes the genitive case following these quantifiers.

> **Tá go leor airgid acu.**   'They have a lot of money.'
> **Tá a lán airgid acu.**   **Tá neart airgid acu.**

Go leor may also follow the noun it quantifies.

> **Feicim madraí go leor.**   'I see many dogs.'

In negative contexts and in questions *mórán* is often substituted for these quantifiers, as discussed in Chapter 6.

> **Níl mórán airgid acu.**   'They don't have much money.'
> **An bhfaca tú mórán madraí?**   'Did you see many dogs?'
> **Nach bhfuil mórán solais ann?**   'Isn't there much light?'

Roinnt– 'some, a few':

> **Tháinig roinnt daoine.**   'Some people came.'

Fuair tú roinnt airgid.	'You got some money.'

This quantifier can also be modified by an adjective, with a subtle meaning shift.

Tháinig roinnt mhaith daoine.	'Quite a few people came.'

Cúpla 'a couple, a few':

Bhí cúpla duine anseo.	'A couple of people were here.'

Cúpla is used only with count nouns. It can also mean a pair of twins. In its more general quantifier usage, some speakers pronounce it with a short vowel. Unlike its English equivalents, *cúpla* is followed by a singular form of the noun it quantifies.

Dóthain 'enough':

D'ith sé a dhóthain.	'He ate enough.'
Fuair sí a dóthain airgid.	'She got enough money.'
An bhfuil do dhóthain pluideanna agat?	'Do you have enough blankets?'

Literally meaning *sufficiency*, *dóthain* is always accompanied by a possessive pronominal indicating for whom the head noun is sufficient. It is grammatically a noun, which may be used alone, as in the first example. Often it is used as a determiner before another noun, which takes the genitive case. In some dialects, *sáith* replaces *dóthain*. In some contexts, *go leor* may also translate as *enough*.

A number of other nouns themselves representing quantities also function as quantifiers for other nouns, which appear in the genitive case after them. The quantity words may also be used alone. These include the following.

An iomarca 'too much, excess'

Ta an iomarca daoine anseo.	'Too many people are here.'
Bhí an iomarca beorach aige.	'He had too much beer.'
D'ith muid an iomarca.	'We ate too much.'

Beagán 'a little'

Tá beagán airgid aige–.	'He has a little money.'
Níor ith mé ach beagán.	'I ate only a little.'

Tuilleadh, níos mó 'more'

Tá níos mó daoine ann anocht.	'There are more people tonight.'
Ar mhaith leat tuilleadh tae?	'Would you like more tea?'
Ní ólfaidh mé a thuilleadh	'I won't drink any more.'

Without a noun following, *tuilleadh* is often possessed, as in the last example above.

Cuid 'some, part of': *Cuid* has a variety of uses, one of which was introduced in constructions with pronominal possessors in Chapter 17, such as *mo chuid Gaeilge* 'my Irish,' *a cuid cairde* 'her friends.' It functions similarly to a quantifier when it is used before nouns, where it has partitive meaning; the noun is introduced by the preposition de.

D'éirigh go maith le cuid de na daltaí.	'Some of the pupils succeeded.'
D'ith mé cuid den bhéile–	'I ate part of the meal.'

De 'of it' is also pronominal, as shown below. If the referent of the pronoun is plural, however, the preposition changes to *ag* (*acu* in the third-person plural, cf. Chapter 22).

D'ith mé cuid de.	'I ate some of it.'
Chonaic mé cuid acu.	'I saw some of them.'

Partitive *cuid* is also found in constructions like the following to indicate membership in a specific group.

Is inealtóir de chuid Aer Lingus é.	'He is an Aer Lingus engineer.'
Seo podchraoladh de chuid RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta.	'Here is a podcast from RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta.'

19.4.2 Postnominal quantifiers

Alongside *áirithe* and *éigin/eicín(t)*, introduced in Section 19.1.1, and the demonstratives in Section 19.2, the following forms follow the noun they determine.

Go léir, uilig, ar fad 'all.' These are essentially interchangeable; they may also follow pronouns.

Chonaic sí a cuid cairde go léir faoi Nollaig.	'She saw all her friends at Christmas.'
Bhí muid uilig in éindí.	'We were all together.'
Bhí na comharsana ar fad ann.	'All the neighbors were there.'

Eile 'other, another, else':

Ceapann daoine eile nach bhfuil sé sin fíor.
  'Other people think that isn't true.
Bhí siopa eile anseo cheana.
  'There was another shop here before.'
Chonaic mé Mairéad, ach ní fhaca mé aon duine eile.

'I saw Mairéad, but I didn't see anyone else.'

Following a definite article, the meaning is *the other (one)*.

Níor léigh mé é seo, ach léigh mé an t-alt eile.
   'I didn't read this but I read the other article.'

Céanna 'same':

Tháinig an fear céanna isteach faoi dhó.
   'The same man came in twice.'

Céanna co-occurs with a definite article, as shown. It can also be used to mean *the very one.*

Cén Tomás atá i gceist agat? Athair Choilm?
   'Which Tomás do you mean? Colm's father?'
–An fear céanna!   'The very man!'

19.4.3 Numbers

Numerals are the quintessential quantifiers, giving as they do precise quantities for count nouns. Irish numbers are sufficiently complex that they deserve their own chapter, and will be presented next.

Numbers

Numerals quantify count nouns with greater precision than the general quantifiers described in the preceding chapter. They are also used in other ways, such as for counting and as parts of names; their forms in Irish can vary according to how they are used. The form and use of numbers is the subject of this chapter.

Counting

In counting without naming the objects being counted, numbers from 1 to 19 are preceded by a particle *a*, which prefixes *h* to a vowel, but causes no other mutations. The basic numbers, which form the building blocks for all others, are provided below, as used in simple counting.

0	náid
1	a haon
2	a dó
3	a trí
4	a ceathair
5	a cúig
6	a sé
7	a seacht
8	a hocht
9	a naoi
10	a deich
11	a haon déag
12	a dó dhéag
13	a trí déag
14	a ceathair déag
15	a cúig déag
16	a sé déag
17	a seacht déag
18	a hocht déag
19	a naoi déag
20	fiche

After *fiche*, numbers combine as in English: *fiche haon*, *fiche dó*, etc. The most common forms of the decimals are as follows.

30	**tríocha**
40	**daichead** (also **ceathracha** in some dialects)
50	**caoga**
60	**seasca**
70	**seachtó**
80	**ochtó**
90	**nócha** (also **naocha** in some dialects)
100	**céad**

An alternative system of counting by twenties is also still in use in some areas. The standard form for 40, *daichead,* is in fact a historical contraction of *dá fhichead* ('two twenties'). *Scór,* another (recently borrowed) word for 20, is also used in counting with this system.

20	**fiche/scór**
40	**dhá fhichead/dhá scór**
50	**leathchéad** ('half a hundred')
60	**trí fichid/tri scóir**
80	**ceithre fichid/ceithre scóir**
100	**céad**
1000	**míle**

The numbers from 1 to 19 fill in the groups of 20: *fiche agus dó dhéag* '32,' *ceithre scóir agus a naoi déag* '99,' etc.

The independent form of the numerals given above is also used in telling time, doing arithmetic (*a dó agus a dó, sin a ceathair* '2 + 2 = 4'), for telephone numbers and such. This is also the form used for numbers that follow a noun, as part of a name or other identification.

an Rí Anraí a hOcht	'King Henry the Eighth'
bus a deich	'bus ten'
ceist uimhir a dó	'question number two'
seomra a sé déag	'room sixteen'

Counting objects

When the object being counted is named, numbers appear without the particle *a* in determiner position before the noun, where, like articles and possessive pronouns, they are unstressed. The numbers for *two* to *six* cause lenition of a noun's initial consonant, and *seven* to *ten* cause eclipsis (*n-* before a vowel). Except in a few cases, described in Section 20.2.2, the noun is in its singular form after a number.

trí bhád	'three boats'
sé bhád	'six boats'
seacht mbád	'seven boats'
deich mbád	'ten boats'

Some numbers change form before a noun.

Independent form	Nominal form
a haon	**bád amháin**
a dó	**dhá bhád**
a ceathair	**ceithre bhád**

Aon and *amháin* can occur together, with the meaning *only one*.

aon bhád amháin 'only one boat.'

Numbers may occur within the same phrase as a definite article, and with demonstratives as well. In these cases, although the noun itself is singular, as noted above, the article will be plural in form with numbers from *three* on, but singular for *one* and *two*. The article prefixes *t-* to *aon,* and *aon* lenites the consonant of a following noun (except for nouns beginning with *t, d,* or *s*).

an t-aon bhád amháin	'the one and only boat'
an dá bhád seo	'these two boats'
na sé bhád	'the six boats'
na hocht mbád	'the eight boats'

Two-digit numbers, when followed by nouns, begin with the unit number, following what might be thought of as the 'four-and-twenty blackbirds' system of counting. The decimal number that follows for the teens is *déag* (*dhéag* following a vowel); otherwise the numbers from 20 to 90 listed above are used.

trí bhád déag	'thirteen boats'
trí dhuine dhéag	'thirteen people'
duine is fiche	'twenty-one people'
cúíg chaora is caoga	'fifty-five sheep'
naoi mbaile is ochtó	'eighty-nine towns'

Numbers above 100 start with the highest digit.

céad fiche is sé mhíle	'126 miles'

20.2.1 Adjectives in number phrases

When a noun modified by an adjective is quantified with a number, the adjective is lenited and plural in form (even though the noun remains singular) after the numbers 2 to 19, regardless of the noun's gender.

trí chapall mhóra	'three big horses'
dhá bhó mhóra	'two big cows'
seacht dteach bhána dhéag	'seventeen white houses'

After decimal numbers (20, 30, 40, etc.) and higher numbers

including *céad, míle, milliún,* the adjective form is singular and agrees in gender with the noun.

fiche capall mór	'twenty big horses'
fiche bó mhór	'twenty big cows'
trí chéad capall mór	'three hundred large horses'
trí chéad bó mhór	'three hundred large cows'

An alternate system of counting when a noun is accompanied by an adjective is to use *ceann* 'one' and a preposition *de* 'of,' as follows.

dhá cheann déag de bháid mhóra	'twelve big boats'
seacht gcinn de charranna dearga	'seven red cars'

See the next section and Section 20.2.4 for the form *(g)cinn.*

20.2.2 Numeral plurals

A few nouns take a plural form following the numerals three to ten. After *dhá* 'two' they are lenited and remain singular, as above. Sometimes the numerical plural form is distinct from the regular plural used in other contexts; other times the same plural form is used in all contexts. Many, but not all, of these are measure or time words. The following appear in their ordinary plural forms (parenthesized) after numbers.

seachtain (seachtainí) 'week'
fichead (fichid) 'twenty'
galún (galúin) 'gallon'
cloch (clocha) 'stoneweight'
slat (slata) 'yard'
scór (scóir) 'score'
ceathrú (ceathrúna) 'quarter'
orlach (orlaí) 'inch'
troigh (troithe) 'foot (measure)'

The plural forms of *cloch* and *slat* are used after numbers only in their measurement sense; when they are used to mean *rock* and *rod/stick,* the singular form is used after numbers as with the regular nouns described at the beginning of this section.

The nouns in Table 20.1 have separate plurals after numbers, distinct from their normal plural forms (shown in parentheses).

Table 20.1 Numerical plurals

Noun	Numerical plural	(Normal plural)	Gloss

uair	uaire	(uaireanta)	'hour, time'
bliain	bliana	(blianta)	'year'
ubh	uibhe	(uibheacha)	'egg'
ceann	cinn	(ceanna)	'head, one'

These numerical plural nouns are not lenited after the numbers three to six, and *h* is prefixed to a vowel; however, they do show eclipsis after seven to ten (*n-* is prefixed before a vowel).

trí huaire	'three hours'
sé bliana	'six years'
seacht mbliana	'seven years'
ocht n-uibhe	'eight eggs'

20.2.3 Dual

The use of singular forms after *dhá* 'two' is a vestige of an older dual form, which eventually merged with the singular. A distinct form remains only in a few words for things that generally come in pairs: *bos, bróg, cos, cluas, lámh* have duals with a slender consonant (identical to the dative that these nouns retain, cf. Chapter 16). The number two is often used (somewhat redundantly) in plurals of these nouns and others like *súil* 'eye,' which already has a slender consonant in its basic form.

Chaith sé a dhá láimh san aer. 'He threw both hands in the air.'
Caithfidh tú seasamh ar do dhá chois féin.
'You must stand on your own two feet.'
D'fhéach sí go díreach idir an dá shúil air.
'She looked him directly in the eyes.'

To refer to one of a pair, the prefix *leath-* –'half' is used: *leathshúil*–'one eye,' *leathchúpla*–'one twin.'

20.2.4 Ceann

Since the prenominal numerical determiners described above are unstressed and cannot occur alone, pronominal *ceann* (Chapter 17) can stand in for a noun to avoid excessive repetition. In this usage it is not translated into English. The plural *cinn* is used after three to ten (unlenited after three to six, but eclipsed after seven to ten).

Tá bád ag Stiofán. Tá dhá cheann ag Pól. Tá trí cinn ag Micí, agus ocht gcinn ag Donncha.

'Stiofán has a boat. Paul has two. Mící has three, and Donncha eight.'

Ordinal numbers

The ordinal numbers, apart from *first* and *second*, are formed regularly with the suffix *-ú*.

first:	**céad** (lenites)
second:	**dara**
third:	**tríú**
fourth:	**ceathrú**
fifth:	**cúigiú**
sixth:	**séú**
seventh:	**seachtú**
eighth:	**ochtú**
ninth:	**naoú**
tenth:	**deichiú**

Double-digit numbers ending in *one* substitute *aonú* for *céad*: *an t-aonú teach déag* 'the eleventh house),' *an t-aonú bád fiche* 'the twenty-first boat,' etc.). In the same contexts, *dara* becomes *dóú*: *an dóú teach déag* 'the twelfth house,' *an dóu bád tríocha* 'the thirty-second house,' etc.).

The ordinal numbers are usually accompanied by the article *an*, which lenites *céad* and prefixes *t-* to numbers beginning with a vowel. It does not cause mutation of the initial consonants of other numbers. *Céad* 'first' lenites its following noun; the others do not affect initial consonants but prefix *h* to a vowel.

an chéad pháiste	'the first child'
an dara carr	'the second car'
an tríú bád	'the third boat'
an seachtú hoileán	'the seventh island'
an t-ochtú páiste	'the eighth child'

Céad may also appear with plural nouns, in which case neither it nor the following noun is lenited: *na céad daoine* 'the first people.'

The *-ú* suffix is also used for higher numbers: *an fichiú bád* 'the twentieth boat,' *an tríú bád is caoga* 'the fifty-third boat,' *an céadú bád* 'the 100th boat,' etc.

Ordinal numerals are also used to express fractions from *ceathrú* onward. Thus *trí cheathrú* 'three-quarters', *cúig ochtú* 'five eigths,' etc. The fractions not based on ordinals are *leath* 'half' and *trian* 'third.'

Ordinals are not used with pronominal possessors. Instead, a

prepositional phrase with *le* or *ag* identifying the owner is used.

an triú mac leis	
an triú mac aige	'his third son'

Personal numbers

When counting people, a separate set of numerals is used for 2 to 12. These personal numerals are as follows.

1. **duine**
2. **beirt**
3. **triúr**
4. **ceathrar**
5. **cúigear**
6. **seachtar** or **mórsheisear** (in Munster)
7. **ochtar**
8. **naonúr**
9. **deichniúr**
10. **aon duine dhéag**
11. **dháréag**

Beirt lenites: *beirt fhear* 'two men.' The other personal numerals do not cause a mutation: *triúr páiste* 'three children,' *ochtar sagart* 'eight priests,' *aon chailín dhéag*'eleven girls,' *dáréag múinteoir* 'twelve teachers.' Beyond twelve, the regular numbers are used.

trí dhuine dhéag	'thirteen people'
seacht sagart déag	'seventeen priests'
cúig dhálta caoga	'fifty-five pupils'

The common singular form of most nouns follows personal numbers: *triúr múinteoir* 'three teachers,' but a genitive plural of *bean* is used: *beirt bhan.* There is also dialect variation, so plurals are also sometimes heard colloquially in some areas.

Adjectives are plural after *beirt* in the CO, but singular after higher personal numbers: *beirt fhear mhóra,* but *cúigear fear mór.*

The personal numbers also function as pronouns, which can be used alone when the type of person is unspecified.

Tá beirt ag teacht.	'Two people are coming.'
Tá cúigear i mo chlann.	'There are five in my family.'

Duine is needed only for the number 11 and anything above 12: *aon*

duine dhéag, ceithre dhuine is caoga, céad duine, etc.

Chapter 21

Adverbs

Adverbs constitute a rather mixed bag of forms that can be used to qualify anything that an adjective doesn't qualify, that is, anything except a noun. Many qualify verbs, as the name suggests, but they may also qualify adjectives, other adverbs, prepositions, and entire clauses. An example of each of these functions is provided here, with further discussion in the sections that follow.

Éiríonn siad *go moch*. 'They get up *early*.'
Tá sé *réasúnta* fuar. 'It is *reasonably* cold.'
Tagann sé minic *go leor*. 'He comes *pretty* often/often *enough*.'
Bhí sé *díreach* ar an mbord. 'It was *right* on the table.'
***Ar an drochuair*, bhí timpiste ar an mbóthar.** '*Unfortunately*, there was an accident on the road.'

As the last example shows, some adverbial modifiers are phrasal.

Verbal modifiers: manner adverbs

The most productive category of adverbs that qualify verbs consists of those formed by adding *go* to an adjective. An *h* is prefixed to a vowel, but no other mutation affects these forms. The usual function of these adverbials is to describe the manner in which an action is performed, serving approximately the same role as the English suffix *-ly*.

Rinne sí an obair go cúramach. 'She did the work carefully.'
Tá Mairéad ag léamh go ciúin. 'Mairéad is reading quietly.'
Siúlann tú go sciobtha. 'You walk quickly.'

Not all adverbs formed with *go* have a manner interpretation, however.

21.1.1 Non-manner adverbs with go

Some adverbs are formed as above, but do not signal manner of an action. The interpretation of these is usually time-related.

Tagann siad anseo go hannamh.	'They come here rarely.'
Tagann tusa go minic.	'You come often.'
D'éirigh mé go moch ar maidin.	'I got up early this morning.'

Most other time adverbs are formed without *go*; these will be described below.

This process of adverb formation is identical to the structure introduced in Chapter 7 for certain adjective predicates of *bí*. Although the historical origin of that structure may have been adverbial, there is little justification for so treating it in the contemporary language. The form, however, is the same.

21.1.2 Manner adverbs without go

A few adverbs of manner are formed not with *go*, but with other phrases, usually prepositional.

Labhair Máire *os ard*.	'Máire spoke *aloud.*'
Labhair Éamonn *os íseal*.	'Séamas spoke *softly.*'
Déan *i gceart* é.	'Do it *right*.'
Rith sé amach *de gheit*.	'He ran out *suddenly*.'

Most such phrasal adverbs, however, are not manner adverbs but are found in other categories, which will be shown in later sections.

21.1.3 Omission of go

When an adverb is itself qualified by another adverb, *go* is omitted. This is true whether the adverb precedes or follows the one modified.

Tá Cathal ag tiomáint go mall.	'Cathal is driving slowly.'
réasúnta mall.	'reasonably slowly.'
mall go leor.	'fairly slowly.'
sách mall.	'slowly enough.'

Verbal modifiers: time and place adverbs

Adverbs of time and place may serve as predicates of *bí* (as in the first example below) or further identify the setting of any verb, usually following all the major constituents of the sentence.

Tá Bláthnaid anseo.	'Bláthnaid is here.'
Chuaigh siad abhaile.	'They went home.'
Ar tháinig sibh inné?	'Did you come yesterday?'
Thug mé an leabhar dó anuraidh.	'I gave him the book last year.'

When a sentence contains both a time and a place adverb, time generally follows place.

D'fhág mé an eochair anseo inné.   'I left the key here yesterday.'

A pronoun object, as described in Chapter 5, is often placed at the end of a sentence and may therefore follow one or more adverbs.

D'fhág mé anseo inné í.   'I left it here yesterday.'

The adverbs illustrated above are all of a type known as *deictic*, that is, they take their precise reference from the situation in which the utterance takes place. A time word like *inniu* or a place adverb like *anseo* refers precisely to the time and place in which the utterance containing them is made, but that time and place can differ with every utterance. The best-known deictic place adverbs are formed from the same elements as the demonstrative pronouns introduced in Chapter 17 and determiners in Chapter 19.

anseo	'here'
ansin	'there'
ansiúd	'yonder'

Ansin also serves as a time adverb meaning *then*, when the precise time reference intended is known from context. Other deictic time adverbs include the following.

anois	'now'
inniu	'today'
inné	'yesterday'
amárach	'tomorrow'
anocht	'tonight'
aréir	'last night'
arú inné	'the day before yesterday'
arú amárach	'the day after tomorrow'
anuraidh	'last year'
arú anuraidh	'the year before last'
i mbliana	'this year'
an mhí seo caite	'last month'
an mhí seo chugainn	'next month'
an tseachtain seo caite/chugainn.	'last/this (coming) week.'

Time and place adverbs with more specific (not deictic) reference often take the form of phrases. A few examples are provided below.

Time:		
	Mí Eanáir	'in January'
	an chéad lá den earrach	'the first day of spring'
	an 7 Lúnasa	'August 7'
	Oíche Nollag	'Christmas Eve'

	ag meán lae	'at noon'
Place:	**ar an mbord**	'on the table'
	faoin leaba	'under the bed'
	thar sáile	'abroad'
	ag an mbaile	'at home'

Prepositional phrases, to be treated further in the next chapter, are a very productive way of creating adverbial phrases, especially for locations, as is clear from the examples.

A few other common lexical adverbs related to time will conclude this section: *arís(t)* 'again,' *cheana* 'previously, before,' *fadó* 'long ago,' *fós* 'still, yet,' *láithreach* 'immediately,' *(a)riamh* 'ever,' to name a few.

Directional adverbs

An elaborate system of deictic adverbs signals the direction or position of an individual or activity in relation to the speaker. Systematic variation in the forms of the directional words indicates whether motion or location is expressed and in some cases whether the direction of motion is toward or away from the speaker. The adverbs that participate in this system will be introduced in ascending order of complexity.

21.3.1 In, out, home

The adverbs meaning *in, out,* and *home* have two forms each, one designating the location of some individual, and the other signalling motion in that particular direction.

Position:	**istigh**	'inside'
	amuigh	'outside'
	sa bhaile	'at home'
	or **sa mbaile**	
Motion:	**isteach**	'toward inside, inward'
	amach	'toward outside, outward'
	abhaile	'toward home, homeward'

The same distinction can be made in English, as the translations indicate, but it usually isn't. In Irish, the distinction is obligatory.

An bhfuil Nóra istigh?	'Is Nóra in?'
Chuamar isteach	'We went in.'
Téigh amach agus fan amuigh	'Go out and stay out.'
Tá a mac sa mbaile	'Her son is at home.'
Tá mé ag dul abhaile	'I'm going home.'

Amuigh and *istigh* may be reinforced with *taobh* to give the meanings 'outside' and 'inside.'

> **Tá sé rófhuar taobh amuigh, ach tá sé go deas taobh istigh**
> 'It's too cold outside, but it's nice inside.'

21.3.2 Up and down, back and forth

Further distinctions characterize the expressions for *up* and *down*, as illustrated in Figure 21.1. Generally speaking, forms beginning with *th-* indicate position without directional movement, while those with *s-* indicate movement away from the speaker, and those beginning with *an-* signal motion toward the speaker. The remainder of each form shows the general direction that is the focus of attention: -*uas*–'above,' and -*íos*–'below.' Note, however, that the English translation doesn't always match these forms, since *anuas* and *aníos* include information about the speaker's perspective and the starting point, whereas the English forms signal only an absolute direction from the mover's point of view.

Figure 21.1 Up and down

> **Tá Ciarán ag dul suas.** 'Ciarán is going up (away from speaker).'
> **Tá Ciarán thuas.** 'Ciarán is upstairs (or anywhere above speaker).'
> **Tá Ciarán ag teacht aníos.** 'Ciarán is coming up (from below).'
> **Tá Ciarán ag dul síos.** 'Ciarán is going down (away from speaker).'
> **Tá Ciarán thíos.** 'Ciarán is down (there).'
> **Tá Ciarán ag teacht anuas.** 'Ciarán is coming down (from above).'

The choice of verb, *go* or *come*, helps to identify the speaker's perspective and force one adverb or the other. However, in other cases, where the speaker's orientation is not part of the verb's meaning, different adverbs may be used with the same verb, signalling the speaker's location with respect to the action.

Titfidh tú síos.	'You'll fall down.' (speaker is above or level with listener)
Titfidh tú anuas.	'You'll fall down.' (listener is above speaker)

Even the positional forms can be used with verbs of motion, as long as

the motion isn't in the direction of the position indicated.

Tá siad ag damhsa thuas.   'They're dancing up there.'
Tá siad ag rith amuigh   'They're running outside' (i.e., they're already outside, running in an unspecified direction)

This last example can be contrasted with the following.

Tá siad ag rith amach.   'They're running out (from inside).'

Adverbs indicating general directionality toward or away from the speaker show the same three-way distinction in form. These are distributed as schematized below.

Figure 21.2 To and fro

Brúigh anonn.   'Move (lit. push) over.'
Tar anall.   'Come over here (from over there).'
Bíonn sí ag siúl anonn is anall.   'She keeps walking back and forth.'
Chuaigh siad sall anuraidh.   'They went over(seas) last year.'
Níor tháinig siad anall fós.   'They haven't come back yet.'
Tá teach beag acu thall i Sasana, agus tá ceann mór abhus.
'They have a small house over in England, and a big one over here.'

These terms signal directionality both in relatively small spaces and across national boundaries, but not in between. Thus, *anonn/sall*, *thall*, and *anall* could refer to a location across the room, or they could refer (for a speaker in Ireland) to America, England, etc., but generally not to somewhere in the next county. For that, the compass points, which will be introduced in the next section, are preferred.

21.3.3 Compass points

Terms referring to points of the compass also vary in form according to the nature of the action and the speaker's perspective. The primary compass points are given in Table 21.1.

Table 21.1 Compass points

| | Location | Movement to (from | Movement from |

		(speaker)	(toward speaker)
West	**thiar**	**siar**	**aniar**
East	**thoir**	**soir**	**anoir**
North	**ó thuaidh**	**ó thuaidh**	**aduaidh**
South	**ó dheas**	**ó dheas**	**aneas**

Tá Bríd thoir i mBaile Átha Cliath   'Bríd is (east of here) in Dublin.'
Beidh mé ag dul siar go Gaillimh anocht   'I'm going (west) to Galway tonight.'

Compounds express directions between the compass points, as in English, but the order of elements is reversed (east-west precedes north-south). The second element is always the form in *a-*.

thiar aduaidh	'in the northwest'
soir aduaidh	'to the northeast'
aniar aneas	'from the southwest'

The *a-* forms are also used for wind direction, indicating movement toward the speaker: *an ghaoth aniar* 'the west wind,' *an ghaoth aduaidh* 'the north wind,' etc.

Descriptions locating one thing with respect to another use *taobh* with the appropriate directional term.

Tá Casla taobh thiar de Ghaillimh.   'Casla is west of Galway.'
Tá ár dteach ar an taobh ó thuaidh   'Our house is on the north side.'

An alternative set of positional forms prefixes *las-* to the directional base *lastuaidh, lastiar, lastoir, laisteas.*

Tá Casla laistiar de Ghaillimh.   'Casla is west of Galway.'

Other adverbs introduced in earlier subsections of Section 21.3 may take these forms as well: *laistigh, lasmuigh, lastuas, laistíos,* etc.

In addition to referring to the compass points, directional terms have metaphoric uses. *Siar, thiar* can be used to mean 'back (in space or time).'

Tá an stábla taobh thiar den teach.

'The stable is behind the house.'
Téann an scéal sin chomh fada siar le haimsir an Ghorta.
'That story goes back to the time of the Famine.'

Other directional terms have metaphoric or idiomatic uses in various set expressions as well, for example: *amach anseo* 'from now on,' *le deich mbliana anuas* 'for the past ten years,' *sa deireadh thiar thall* 'at long last.'

Adjective modifiers

Certain adjectives and nouns can be used as intensifying adverbs with another adjective; these are not preceded by *go*, and adjective predicates that usually take *go* also omit it when modified.

Tá tú iontach ciúin 'You are very (lit. wonderfully) quiet.'
Tá sé uafásach fuar 'It's awfully cold.'
Bhí an lá réasúnta deas 'The day is reasonably nice.'
Tá an páiste rud beag tinn 'The child is a little bit sick.'
Tá mé beagán tuirseach 'I'm a little tired.'

Several adverbial prefixes are also used with adjectives, and sometimes with manner adverbs, to indicate varying levels of intensity. These include *an-*, *ró-*, *rí-*, *barr-*, *fíor-*, and *síor-*, all of which cause lenition of a following consonant where applicable.

Bí an-chiúin! 'Be very quiet!'
Tá tú róchiúin 'You are too quiet.'
Tá siad ríchiúin 'They are very, very quiet.'
Tá siad barrchiúin 'They are extremely quiet.'
Tá sibh fíorchiúin 'You are truly quiet.'
Bhí sé ag siúl agus ag síórimeacht. 'He was walking and continuing to go on and on.'

The prefix *an-* is by far the most frequently used of these, and is always separated from the adjective by a hyphen. The others do not use a hyphen unless the prefix brings together two vowels or like consonants.

ró-óg   'too young'
barr-ramhar   'extremely fat'

An- is also found prefixed to nouns, with the meaning *fine, excellent.*

an-fhear–	'good man'
an-aimsir–	'great weather'

When these adverbs are prefixed to a predicate adjective normally preceded by *go, go* is usually omitted, but may be retained before *an-* and occasionally other prefixes.

Tá an aimsir rímhaith.	'The weather is very good.'
Tá sí sin fíorálainn.	'She is truly beautiful.'
Níl an lá ródhona.	'The day is not too bad.'
Tá an lá an-mhaith.	
Tá an lá go han-mhaith.	'The day is very good.'
Fógraíodh é go fíoroifigiúil.	'It was announced very officially.'

The same pattern is found when *an-* qualifies an adverb: *go* is usually retained before *an-* but may not be before other prefixes.

Rinne tú an obair go han-mhaith.   'You did the work very well.'
Ná tiomáin róscioptha!   'Don't drive too fast!'

Sentential adverbs

Adverbs that include the entire clause in their scope may appear either at the beginning or end of the sentence.

Ar an drochuair, níl siad anseo.	'Unfortunately, they aren't here.'
Níl siad anseo, ar an drochuair.	'They aren't here, unfortunately.'

Many adverbial expressions with whole clause scope take the form of predicates of *is* (Chapter 7), with the sentence they modify subordinated to the predicate either as a complement or relative clause, depending on the adverbial.

B'fhéidir **go dtiocfaidh siad ar ball.**   '*Maybe* they will come later.'
Is dócha **go mbeidh siad anseo.**   'They'll *probably* be here.'
Is ar éigean **atá sé beo.**   'He is *barely* alive.'
Is beag nár **thit mé.**   'I *almost* fell.'

Notice the negative form *nár* in the last example above. When *is beag* is used adverbially to mean 'almost,' the complementizer is always negative. Variant forms of these can also be used in final position of a main clause, but these are less frequent.

Tiocfaidh siad ar ball, b'fhéidir. 'They'll come later, perhaps.'
Beidh siad anseo, is dócha. 'They'll probably be here,'
Tá sé beo ar éigean.
'He is barely alive.' **Thit mé, beagnach.** 'I almost fell.'

Beagnach is most common as an adverb qualifying an adjective.

Tá mé beagnach réidh.   'I am almost ready.'

Soon is commonly expressed as a predicate like those above, but separate sentence-final adverbials are also found. All of the following are similar in meaning.

Is gearr go dtiocfaidh siad.
Ní fada go dtiocfaidh siad.
Tiocfaidh siad *go gairid.* 'They will come *soon.*'
Tiocfaidh siad *ar ball.*
Tiocfaidh siad *go luath.* (can also mean 'they will come early')

Other time adverbs, like *go minic* 'often' and *go hannamh* 'rarely,' can also be used as predicates, with the most natural translation still being an English adverb.

Is minic a thagann siad. 'They come often.'
Is annamh a thagann siad. 'They come rarely.'

Comparison

Like the adjectives they are derived from, manner adverbs and others formed with *go* are compared using *níos* (*ní ba*) for the comparative and *is* for the superlative degrees. *Go* is omitted when *níos* is used.

Tagann sé níos minice ná tusa.   'He comes more often than you.'
Ritheann an capall seo níos sciobtha.   'This horse runs faster.'

The comparative adverb may also appear as a predicate of the copula, followed by a relative clause (see Chapter 24).

Is minice a thagann sé (ná tusa).   'He comes more often than you.'

For the superlative degree, an adverb normally takes the form of a copula predicate following the noun, with the remainder of the sentence as a relative clause (see Chapter 24).

an duine is minice a thagann	'the person who comes most often'
an capall is sciobtha a ritheann	'the horse that runs fastest'
an bia is mó a thaitníonn liom	'the food I like most'

Similarly, adverbs use *chomh…le*, omitting *go*, to express equality.

Rithim chomh sciobtha leatsa.	'I run as fast as you.'

Chapter 22

Prepositions

Prepositions indicate a relationship between a noun in a phrase immediately following it and some other noun or verb in the sentence. Often the basic relationship expressed is that of location, but other relations, such as time, possession, part-whole relations, origin, etc., can also be identified, depending on the semantics of the preposition and the nouns associated with it. Rarely does a preposition express only one relationship in every use; translations vary accordingly by context. In this chapter, the most basic and best-known translation will be used for convenience, but any good dictionary will show other possibilities. The object of a preposition is the noun or noun phrase immediately following it; mutation effects and/or case marking of the object noun follow from this closeness. Irish prepositions may be either simple or complex; these will be covered in turn in this chapter.

Simple prepositions

Simple prepositions are unstressed and often, though not always, cause a mutation on their noun objects. In some cases they may contract with a definite article or other determiner. Many of the most common prepositions are of this type. A baker's dozen of the most frequent are listed below, along with discussion of any morphological effects they display on immediately following nouns.

• **ag** 'at, by'	No mutation of nouns immediately following it: **ag Caitríona**
• **ar** 'on'	Lenites immediately following noun: **ar Bhríd**
• **as** 'from, out of'	No mutation: **as Ciarraí**
• **chuig** 'to, toward'	No mutation: **chuig Ciarraí**
• **de** 'from, off of'	Lenites, contracts to **d'** before a vowel: **de dhuine, d'uisce**. Contracts with possessive **a** 'his, her, their' and **ár** 'our' to **dá**: **dá mhac, dár mac**
• **do** 'to, for'	Lenites, contracts to **d'** before a vowel: **do Bhrian, d'Úna**. Contracts with vowel-initial possessive to **dá, dár**, as above

• **faoi** 'under, about'	Lenites: **faoi thalamh**. Inserts **n** before vowel-initial possessor: **faoina mhac**
• **idir** 'between'	Lenites in fixed phrases: **idir bheag agus mhór**, but not in general expressions of location, difference, or opposition: **idir Donncha agus Úna**
• **i(n)** 'in'	Eclipses: **i gCiarraí.** The **n** is omitted before an eclipsed consonant, but is written and pronounced before a vowel: **in Éirinn**
• **le** 'with'	No mutation of consonants. Inserts **h** before a vowel: **le hairgead**. Inserts **n** before a vowel-initial possessor: **lenár mac, lena clann**
• **ó** 'from'	Lenites: **ó Shasana**. Inserts **n** before a vowel-initial *possessor*: **óna iníon**
• **roimh** 'before'	Lenites: **roimh Mháirtín, roimh mheán-lae**
• **thar** 'over, past'	Lenites: **thar bhliain** 'over a year'; **thar Ghaillimh** 'past Galway'
• **trí** 'through'	Lenites: **trí Ghaeilge**. Inserts **n** before a vowel-initial possessor: **trínár mbaile**

Lenition is often absent in set phrases with prepositions, even when they normally lenite; e.g., *ar bord* 'on board' contrasts with *ar bhord* 'on a table.' Similarly, we find *ar crochadh* 'hanging,' *ar meisce* 'drunk,' *ar fáil* 'available,' *thar barr* 'excellent,' *thar sáile* 'overseas,' etc.

When the noun phrase object of a preposition includes the article *an*, this may contract with some of the above prepositions. Most prepositions ending in a vowel are written as one word with the article, and its vowel is elided: *den, don, faoin, ón. Le* becomes *leis* and *trí* becomes *tríd* when followed by *an*.

faoin leaba	'under the bed'
den uisce	'of the water'
don leanbh	'to/for the baby'
ón oifig	'from the office'
leis an am	'with time'
tríd an uisce	'through the water'

Leis may be retained with the plural article *na* in some dialects, but not in others; *tríd* reverts to *trí* before plural phrases, as shown below.

leis na buachaillí/le na buachaillí	'with the boys'
trí na goirt	'through the fields'

The combination of *in* with the definite article is *insan*, in the plural *insna.* These usually contract to *sa* (*san* before a vowel), *sna* in both speech and writing.

sa seomra	'in the room'
san oifig	'in the office'
sna seomraí	'in the rooms'

If the object of a preposition consists of two nouns or phrases

conjoined with *agus* 'and,' the preposition is repeated before the second conjunct.

sa teach agus san oifig	'in the house and office'
le Pádraig agus le Siobhán	'with Pádraig and Siobhán'

22.1.1 Mutation in prepositional phrases with the article

The mutations identified in the above list apply only when a bare noun, such as a proper name or an indefinite form, immediately follows the preposition. When the noun phrase object of the preposition includes the definite article *an*, however, the mutation patterns are different, and vary regionally.

In all dialects, *de* and *do* plus the article are accompanied by lenition of the noun object.

Tóg den bhord é.	'Take it off the table.'
Tabhair don pháiste é.	'Give it to the child.'

In Ulster dialects, all other prepositions also lenite the nouns they govern.

However, the dialects of Munster and Connacht prefer eclipsis after other prepositions (excepting the dialect of Achill Island in Mayo, which follows Ulster in the matter of mutations).

Ulster, Achill	Connacht, Munster	
ar an bhus	**ar an mbus**	'on the bus'
as an Ghaeltacht	**as an nGaeltacht**	'out of the Gaeltacht'
leis an chailín	**leis an gcailin**	'with the girl'

Connacht and Munster part ways in the case of *i(n)*, however. Like Ulster and the CO, nouns after *sa* 'in the' are lenited in Munster dialects, but in Connacht (except for Achill), they are eclipsed.

Ulser, Munster, Achill	Connacht	
sa Fhrainc	**sa bhFrainc**	'in France'
sa phóca	**sa bpóca**	'in the pocket'
sa chistin	**sa gcistin**	'in the kitchen'

As was discussed in Chapter 19, the presence of *n* blocks mutation of *t*, *d*, and *s*. However, phrases with feminine nouns following *an* prefix a *t* before the *s*, as described in Section 19.1.2, Chapter 19. Masculine nouns are unaffected.

ar an tsraid	'on the street'
ag an séipéal	'at the chapel'

For further details and examples of *t* prefixation to *s* in other cases where mutation of other consonants is expected, see Section 19.1.2, Chapter 19.

22.1.2 Inflection of prepositions

When the object of a preposition is a pronoun, inflected forms of these prepositions are used; these are sometimes known as *prepositional pronouns*. These forms are complex and not entirely predictable, but some general patterns can be discerned, which will be presented here narratively in lieu of the list of paradigms for each preposition typical of most grammars. First-person singular forms all end in *-m*, second singular in *-t*. All first-person plural forms end in *-inn* and second plural in *-ibh*. What happens to the prepositional stem before these endings varies, however.

Prepositions ending in a slender consonant broaden it, with spelling changes (shown in parentheses below) to reflect this, and the vowel *a* is added before the suffixes to create a second syllable and identify the consonant quality. Examples with *chuig*–'to, toward' are given below, as the most regular case.

chugam	'toward me'
chugat	'toward you'
chugainn	'toward us'
chugaibh	'toward you (pl.)'

The following prepositions are inflected similarly: *ag, as, in* (*ionam*, etc., with broadening), *roimh* (*romham*, etc.), *thar*. Exceptionally, *ar* changes its vowel to *o* and does not add a second (written) syllable in the singular forms: *orm, ort*, but a second syllable is written in *orainn, oraibh*.

Prepositions ending in a vowel add the same endings (without the added *a*), although in some cases the vowel may change so that the inflectional stem is different from the simple preposition. The vowel of *de* becomes *í*, that of *faoi* becomes *ú*, and *ó* changes to *uai* before the personal endings. An *o* is inserted before the broad consonants of the singular endings following a front vowel, as required by the spelling rules (Chapter 2); in the case of inflected forms of *ó*, however, the suffixes themselves become slender.

díom	'of me'
fúm	'under me'

Similarly for the second-person singular: *díot,* etc. *Do* regularly adds *-m* for first-person *dom* but also changes the vowel in the second-person singular, giving *duit. Le* changes its vowel to *i* except in the second-person singular, which uses *ea: liom, leat linn, libh.* In the plural, *faoi* adds the regular endings to its pronominal stem *fú,* giving *fúinn, fúibh.* The *i* of the plural suffixes *-inn* and *-ibh* is elided following prepositions ending in *i* or *í:* adding just the consonants of the endings. This includes stems that don't change, like *trí: trínn, tríbh,* as well as the inflectional stems of *de, ó,* and *le: dínn, díbh, uainn, uaibh, linn, libh.* The plural forms of *do* change the stem vowel: *dúinn, daoibh.*

Third-person forms are more idiosyncratic still, and are best simply learned for each preposition. The third-person forms are provided in Table 22.1.

Table 22.1 Third-person prepositional pronouns

Preposition	Third-person M: him	Third-person F: her	Third-person pl.: them
ag	aige	aici	acu
ar	air	uirthi	orthu
as	as	aisti	astu
chuig	chuige	chuici	chucu
de	de	di	díobh
do	dó	di	dóibh
faoi	faoi	fúithi	fúthu
idir	--	--	eatarthu
i(n)	ann	inti	iontu
le	leis	léi	leo
ó	uaidh	uaithi	uathu
roimh	roimhe	roimpi	rompu
thar	thairis	thairsti	tharstu
trí	tríd	tríthi	tríothu

Some generalizations emerge even among these forms. Feminine forms generally end in *i,* following a slender consonant or vowel. Most plural forms have a broad consonant internally and end in *u,* with the exception of *de, do,* and *le.* But changes to the prepositional stems are fairly idiosyncratic on the whole, as are the masculine singular forms.

Idir inflects only in the plural, where its inflectional stem is *ead-: eadrainn, eadraibh.* In the third person, as shown in the table, the *d* changes to *t* and a syllable is added.

Dialect variation is extensive. Connacht dialects often reduce *agam, agat,* and *againn* to a single syllable, omitting the /g/: *'am, 'at, 'ainn;* Munster shifts the stress to the second syllable: *agAM,* etc. Connacht and Ulster have merged *ag* and *chuig* for the most part, and some forms of *de* and *do* are merged in parts of Connacht. Ulster

prepositional pronouns vary even more; space does not permit a full treatment of these variations here, but they can be found in the dialect monographs dealing with Ulster Irish, e.g., Wagner (1979); Ó Baoill (1996).

Full paradigms for all the inflected prepositions above, plus a few less common ones, are readily available in any grammar of Irish with a focus on morphology, including those of the Christian Brothers, the Caighdeán Oifigiúil; the various dialect-specific monographs published by the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, among others, show further the range of variation for those interested.

22.1.3 Uninflected prepositions

Not all prepositions have inflected forms for pronoun objects. The following do not, and are simply followed by the regular non-subject pronoun forms: *ach, gan, go dtí, mar, marach, ná, seachas*.

duine ar bith ach é	'no one but him'
Imigh gan mé.	'Go without me.'
Tháinig sé go dtí í.	'He came toward her.'
duine mar thusa	'a person like you'
Bheinn ann murach é.	'I'd have been there but for him.'
níos sine ná sibhse	'older than you'
gach duine seachas iad	'everyone except them'

Idir also takes simple pronouns in cases like the following.

idir mise agus tusa	'between me and you'
Dia idir sinn agus an anachain.	'God between us and harm'

When followed by nouns, most of these prepositions do not cause mutation, but *gan* and *mar* may lenite.

duine gan mhaith	'a no-good person'
mar dhuine tinn	'like a sick person'

Gan does not lenite proper names, words beginning with *d, f, s,* or *t,* or nouns qualified with other material like adjectives, genitives, or clauses.

Certain other simple prepositions require a genitive form of their noun object. These include most productively *chun, cois, timpeall, trasna*.

duine a chur chun *báis*	'putting someone *to death*'
cois *na habhann*	'beside *the river*, on the riverbank'
timpeall *an tí*	'around *the house*'
trasna *an bhóthair*	'across *the road*'

Pronoun objects of *chun* use the inflected forms of *chuig*. The others take possessive determiners as pronoun objects, often with another preposition as a placeholder.

lena chois	'beside him/it'
ina thimpeall	'around him/it'

Compound prepositions

Still other prepositions are more complex in form, consisting usually of a simple preposition and a noun. These are called *compound prepositions.* A few of the many compound prepositions of Irish are listed below.

de réir	'according to'
de bharr	'because of'
faoi cheann	'by (time)'
go ceann	'for the duration of'
i gcoinne	'against'
i measc	'among'
i ndiaidh	'after, following'
in aghaidh	'in front of'
in ionad	'instead of'
os cionn	'above'
os comhair	'in front of'
tar éis	'after (time)'

Compound prepositions are followed by the genitive forms of their objects.

ar nós na bhFrancaigh	'like the French'
ar fud na cathrach	'throughout the city'
de réir an scéil	'according to the story'
faoi cheann seachtaine	'(with)in a week'
i measc na ndaoine	'among the people'
i ndiaidh an chapaill	'after/following the horse'
os comhair an tí	'in front of the house'
tar éis bliana eile	'after another year'

Pronoun objects take the form of possessive determiners, before the noun but after the prepositional component.

dá bharr	'because of him/it'
inár gcoinne	'against us'
ina measc	'among them'
i do dhiaidh	'after you'
ina haghaidh	'in front of her'
os mo chionn	'above me, over my head'

On occasion, compound prepositions combine with a simple one, and the object is as it would be with the simple preposition.

Tá siad in aice leis an teach.
(also: **in aice an tí**)
Tiocfaidh mé in éineacht leat.

'They are next to the house.'

'I will come with you.'

Bhí timpiste mar gheall air sin.
'There was an accident because of that/him.'

Complex sentences

Complex sentences contain more than one clause. They include sentences with coordinate clauses of equal status and those containing various subordinate clauses, with both finite (marked for tense) and non-finite (verbal noun) verb forms. These vary in structure according to the types of clauses combined and will be described in the chapters of this final grammar section.

Coordinate, complement, and adjunct clauses

This chapter describes a variety of complex sentences that can be formed from multiple clauses; some are complement clauses, required by particular verbs to make a complete sentence, while others are not essential to complete the sentence, but provide additional details that the speaker may choose to include.

Coordinate structures

Sentences linked together with conjunctions such as *agus* 'and,' *ach* 'but,' and *nó* 'or' are joined into a complex sentence with just the linking word between them and no other change to the simple sentence form. The two clauses are equal in status, with neither subordinate to the other. Each has exactly the same form it would have without the conjunction.

Tá Sinéad 76 bhliain d'aois, agus tá a fear 82 bhliain.
 'Sinéad is 76 years old and her husband is 82.'

Ba bhreá an t-amhránaí é, agus bhain sé cáil amach ina dhiaidh sin.
 'He was a fine singer, and he became famous later.'

Lig Órla osna agus d'amharc sí thart.
 'Órla sighed and she looked around.'

Bhí sé tuirseach ach bhí áthas air.
 'He was tired but he was happy.'

An dtiocfaidh tú nó an bhfanfaidh tú?
 'Will you come or will you stay?'

If two conjoined clauses have the same subject, the subject may sometimes be omitted in the second clause (parentheses in an example indicate that the word or phrase is optional).

Tháinig sé isteach agus shuigh (sé) síos.   'He came in and sat down.'

Rith sé suas an staighre agus shleamhnaigh isteach.
    'He ran up the stairs and slipped in.'

If both clauses are negative, the conjunction *ná–* 'nor' may replace *agus*.

Ní fhaca mé é ná níor chuala mé é.   'I didn't see him, nor did I hear him.'

Ní dhéanfaidh sé féin é ná ní ligfidh sé d'éinne eile é a dhéanamh.
    'He won't do it and he won't let anyone else do it either.'

The polarity of each sentence, that is, whether it is affirmative or negative, need not be the same across the conjoined clauses.

Dhún sé an doras, ach níor chuir sé glas air.
    'He closed the door but he didn't lock it.'

Likewise, the tense of each clause may differ.

Ní fhaca mé Treasa inniu, ach tá súil agam go bhfeicfidh mé anocht í.
    'I didn't see Treasa today, but I hope that I will see her tonight.'

As an alternative to *nó* or', *sin nó* may be used to emphasize that only the two choices exist.

Bhí Breandán i láthair ag an gcruinniú; sin nó bhí sé tinn.
    'Breandán was present at the meeting; either that or he was sick.'

Complement clauses

Complement clauses were introduced briefly in Chapter 5 as a common type of subordinate clause. Dependent on another verb in the sentence, and usually necessary to complete the verbal phrase semantically, they are introduced by the complementizer particle *go*'that,' which eclipses consonants and prefixes *n-* to vowels. If the clause is negative, the particle *nach* 'that… not' is used, causing the same mutations. These clauses are sometimes referred to as indirect, or reported, speech because they are often used for indirect quotations after *deir* 'says' and other verbs of saying or of mental processes.

Sílim go mbuann siad go minic.	'I think that they often win.'
Sílim nach mbuann siad go minic.	'I think that they don't often win.'
Tá mé cinnte go gcreidfidh sí mé.	'I'm certain that she'll believe me.'
Tá mé cinnte nach gcreidfidh sí mé.	'I'm certain she won't believe me.'
Deir Síle go n-ólann sí fíon dearg.	'Síle says that she drinks red wine.'
Deir Síle nach n-ólfaidh sí tae.	'Síle says she won't drink tea.'

Unlike English *that*, which may be omitted (as in several translations above), Irish *go* (and *nach*) cannot be left out. To do so in any of the above sentences would render it ungrammatical (as indicated by the asterisk below).

*Sílim buann siad go minic

If there are two or more verbs in the subordinate clause, *go* precedes each of them.

Tá a fhios agam go gceannóidh sé deoch agus go n-ólfaidh sé í.
   'I know that he will buy a drink and drink it.'

Many adjectival predicates also take complement clauses, among them *tá sé fíor* 'it is true,' *is cinnte* 'it is certain,' *is cosúil* 'it seems, apparently,' and the various epistemic modal predicates introduced in Section 15.2, Chapter 15. As indicated by the translation of *is cosúil*, certain copula predicates may translate adverbially but they function as predicates and require a complement clause as their subject. *B'fhéidir* 'perhaps' is another common such adverbial. Complements of these predicates are formed in the same way described above.

Is cosúil nach dtaitníonn sé sin leat.
   'It seems you don't like that/Apparently you don't like that.'
B'fhéidir go dtiocfaidh siad amárach.

'Perhaps/it is possible that they will come tomorrow.'

Some nominal copula predicates also function similarly.

'Chuile sheans go dtiocfaidh siad. 'It's very likely that they'll
come.' (Lit. 'Every chance that they will come.')

Drochsheans go dtiocfaidh siad. 'They are unlikely to come.'

(Lit. 'Poor chance that they'll come.')

Recall from Chapter 6 the changes that complementizers undergo in
past-tense clauses. The lenition characteristic of past-tense verbs is
retained after these particles, but the prefixed *d'* found before vowels
and lenited *f* is omitted after the complementizers.

Deir sé gur/nár thuig sé.	'He says that he understood/didn't understand.'
Sílim gur/nár imir siad.	'I think that they played/didn't play.'

Complement clauses often fall naturally at the end of a sentence, but if
additional phrases are present that would normally follow a noun
complement, a clausal complement is generally placed after them.
Compare the following.

D'inis sé *scéal spéisiúil* dúinn aréir.
'He told us an interesting story last night.'

Dúirt sé linn aréir *gur chuala sé scéal spéisiúil.*
'He told us last night that he'd heard an interesting story.'

Chinn an scrúdú orm. 'I failed the exam.'

Chinn orm an obair a chríochnú. 'I failed to finish the work.'

23.2.1 Sequence of tense

If the main verb of a sentence is in the past tense, the tense of the
subordinate clause may change according to the time relationship
between the event expressed by the main verb and that of the
subordinate clause. If the two events are contemporaneous, then the
past tense is used for both; likewise the past tense is the norm when

the event of the complement precedes that of the main clause, both in the past.

> **Dúirt Eibhlín go raibh sí tinn.**
> 'Eibhlín said that she was sick.'
> (What Eibhlín said: **Tá mé tinn**)

> **Dúirt Máirtín go raibh Aoife anseo anuraidh.**
> 'Máirtin said that Aoife was here last year.'
> (What Máirtín said: **Bhí Aoife anseo anuraidh**)

Present habitual remains present habitual if the event described by the verb is still true at the time of speech, but may be past habitual to indicate that it is no longer true. That is, the tense of the complement need not change from what it would be as a main verb.

> **Dúirt sí go dtéann sí ar saoire san Iodáil.**
> 'She said that she goes on holiday in Italy
> (and she still does).'

> **Dúirt sí go dtagadh sí ar saoire san Iodáil.**
> 'She said that she used to go on holiday in Italy
> (but no more).'

This usage in complements contrasts with the narrative use of the past tense, where a past habitual stands in for what would be present habitual in direct speech about the present time, as in this example from a novel, talking about a situation that held at the time that the story took place.

> **Bhí dhá chineál ósta ann: na cinn a choinníodh uaireanta**
> **dleathacha, agus na cinn nach gcoinníodh.**
> 'There were two kinds of pub: those that kept legal hours and
> those that didn't.'

If the event in a complement clause is future with respect to a past-tense main verb, the futurity is expressed by use of the conditional form.

> **Dúirt Nuala go dtiocfadh sí.**
> 'She said that she'd come.'

(What she said: **Tiocfaidh mé**)

Cheap mé nach mbeadh fearg uirthi.
'I didn't think she'd be angry.'
(What I thought: **Ní bheidh fearg uirthi**)

23.2.2 Non-finite complements

Complement clauses with verbal nouns rather than tensed complements are also used. Complements of modal predicates expressing necessity, obligation, permission, and ability were described in Chapter 15; two examples here will serve as a reminder.

Ba cheart duit leabhar a scríobh.	'You should write a book.'
Níl mé in ann é sin a dhéanamh.	'I am not able to do that.'

Indirect orders and requests also typically take the form of verbal noun complements.

Dúirt siad linn fanacht ansin.	'They told us to stay there.'
D'iarr sé orainn cúnamh a thabhairt leis.	'He asked us to help him.'

Other verbs of speaking allow both tensed and VN clauses.

Gheall tú dúinn go dtiocfá.	'You promised that you'd come.'
Gheall tú dúínn teacht.	'You promised us to come.'

Negative verbal noun complements are introduced by *gan* 'without.'

Dúirt siad linn gan fanacht.	'They told us not to wait.'
Gheall tú gan teacht anocht.	'You promised not to come tonight.'

There is much dialect variation in details of complement clauses, and the forms of local complementizers. A detailed account of this variation can be found in Ó Siadhail (1989).

Embedded questions

Questions may also be found subordinated to verbs and phrases indicating uncertainty or questioning, such as *fiafraigh* 'ask,' *níl a fhios agam* 'I don't know,' *n'fheadar* (in Munster) 'I don't know, I wonder,' *níl mé cinnte* 'I'm not sure,' etc. Subordinate, or indirect, questions are exactly the same as ordinary questions (see Chapter 6), using the particle *an*. Unlike English, which uses a different order of subject and verb in subordinate questions, Irish indirect questions do not change

form.

An airíonn sí tinn?	'Does she feel sick?'
Fiafraigh di an airíonn sí tinn.	'Ask her if she feels sick.'
An gcuirfidh sé báisteach?	'Will it rain?'

> **Níl mé cinnte an gcuirfidh sé báisteach.**
> 'I'm not sure if it will rain.'

As with main clause questions, a second clause containing the negative of the first verb can be added to any of these for greater precision, but is usually omitted.

> **Fiafraigh an airíonn sí tinn (nó nach n-airíonn).**
> 'Ask whether she feels sick (or not).'

> **Níl mé cinnte an gcuirfidh sé báisteach (nó nach gcuirfidh).**
> 'I'm not sure if it will rain (or not).'

Tense usage is as described for complements in Section 23.2.1 above. Past-tense forms in questions under a past-tense main verb may be ambiguous as to time reference in the same way described there.

> **Ní raibh mé cinnte an raibh tú anseo.** 'I wasn't sure if you were here (either at the moment I was wondering about it, or some time earlier).'

> **D'fhiafraigh sé díom ar chuala me é.** 'He asked me if I (had) heard it.'
> (What he asked: **Ar chuala tú é?** or **An gcloiseann tú é?**)

Constituent questions likewise serve as complements to verbs of questioning or uncertainty, with no change in form.

Fiafraigh de cé a tháinig.	'Ask him who came.'
Níl a fhios acu cá bhfuil siad ag dul.	'They don't know where they are going.'
D'inis sé dó céard a chonaic sé.	'He told him what he'd seen.'

Adjunct (adverbial) clauses

Many subordinate clauses are not complements to another word, but

rather are adjuncts, non-obligatory modifier clauses that function similarly to adverbs and are introduced by a large variety of adverbial complementizer particles, often with the relative particle *a* or the now familiar complementizer *go*. An overview of the clause types will be given in this section. The full range of phrases introducing adjunct clauses is very large, and varies across regions; space does not permit inclusion of all such phrases, but common examples of each type will be provided. In terms of meaning, adjunct clauses may express temporal, circumstantial, concessive, purpose, or causal relations to the rest of the sentence. In terms of form, most are introduced by *go*, and these will be the focus of this section, although other structures occur as well, and will be mentioned briefly or covered in other chapters.

23.4.1 Causal clauses

A particularly rich category, causal clauses are introduced by a wide variety of more or less interchangeable phrases, among them *mar (gheall) go*, *toisc go*, *de bharr go*, *os rud é go*, *ó tharla go*.

Bhí fearg air mar gheall nach bhfuair sé féin talamh.
  'He was angry because he himself didn't get land.'

Ghlac sé leis an bpost toisc go raibh sé ag iarraidh bogadh ar ais.
  'He accepted the job because he wanted to move back.'

Ó tharla go raibh sé as baile ag an am, ní fhaca mé é.
  'Since he was away from home at the time, I didn't see him.'

Chuir an sneachta iontas orthu mar nach raibh sé feicthe acu cheana.
  'The snow surprised them, because they hadn't seen it before.'

Bhí tuilleadh talún uathu, mar go raibh na feirmeacha róbheag.
  'They wanted more land, because the farms were too small.'

Mar is also used alone as a causal complementizer, without any further mark of subordination.

Thosaigh sé ag caoineadh, mar bhí sé tinn.
  'He began crying, for he was sick.'

Mar go is more likely to be heard in Munster; *mar* on its own is preferred in Connacht.

23.4.2 Temporal clauses

Most adverbial clauses of time are introduced by direct relative clauses. These will be covered in the next chapter. A few temporal clauses that are introduced by phrases with *go* or similar complementizers are presented here.

Sula, *sara* 'before.' The choice of form is regional, *sara* being typical of the southern dialects, *sula* of the northern. Both are followed by eclipsis of regular verbs (*sular/sarar* before the past tense) and dependent forms of irregular verbs, although in some Connacht dialects, *sulmá*, with lenition, is also heard.

Bhí siad anseo sular imigh tú.
  'They were here before you left.'

Bhí siad anseo sulmá tháinig tusa.
  'They were here before *you* came.'

Tháinig na cuairteoirí sara raibh a seomra réidh.
  'The visitors came before their room was ready.'

Ba cheart dúinn críochnú sula dtiocfaidh sé.
  'We should finish before he comes.'

Bhí sé bliain ann sula bhfuair sé aon deis éalú.
  'He was there a year before he got a chance to escape.'

With future time reference, a subjunctive form is sometimes still used, although this practice is dying out.

Críochnóidh muid an obair sula dtaga an Cháisc.
  'We'll finish the work before Easter comes.'

Go, go dtí go/nach, nó go 'until.' The various particles and phrases meaning *until* have the same mutation effects as *sula*. Also like *sula*,

they may be followed by a subjunctive in future contexts, but this occurs more rarely nowadays than the future form.

Fan go dtiocfaidh sé/Fan go dtaga sé.
'Wait until he comes.'

Níor imigh sí nó go bhfuair sí freagra.
'She didn't leave until she got an answer.'

Ghearr sé an aicearra nó go raibh sé thíos tigh Pheadair.
'He took the shortcut until he was down at Peadar's house.'

D'fhanamar go dtí nach raibh aon airgead fágtha againn.
'We stayed until we had no money left.'

Go dtí nach is the only negative form in *until* clauses.

23.4.3 Concessive clauses

Concessive clauses (English *although*, *despite*) can be introduced by *cé go*, *bíodh (is) go*, or *tar éis go*, among others less frequent.

Cé go rabhdar imithe thar sáile, bhí Conamara i gcónaí mar bhaile acu.
'Although they had gone abroad, Conamara was always home to them.'

Chríochnaigh mé an obair, bíodh is go raibh sé deacair.
'I finished the work, although it was hard.'

Tar éis go raibh an oíche fliuch, chuaigh siad amach.
'Although the night was wet, they went out.'

23.4.4 Purpose clauses

Purpose clauses are introduced by forms like *sa chaoi go*, *súil is go*, and sometimes just *go*, plus many more with the same or a similar meaning. A few others take verbal noun complements (see below).

Bhreathnóinn isteach trí na fuinneogaí, súil is go bhfeicfinn bean Pháidín.
 'I'd look in through the windows, hoping to see Páidín's wife.'

Shuigh sé síos go ligfeadh sé scíth.
 'He sat down to rest.'

Labhair Gaeilge liom, sa gcaoi go dtiocfaidh feabhas orm!
 'Speak Irish to me, so I'll improve!

Leagadar na droichid sa gcaoi nach bhféadfadh na saighdiúirí dul trasna na habhann.
 'They knocked down the bridges so that the soldiers couldn't cross the river.'

Cuirfidh mé glaoch ort sa tslí is go mbeidh a fhios agat céard atá ar siúl.
 'I'll call you so you'll know what's going on.'

Non-finite adjuncts

Some prepositions, doubling as adverbial complementizers, take verbal noun structures to express some of the same adjunct relations described above. These include certain time and purpose clauses, as well as a subordinate structure introduced by *agus* 'and,' which can have a variety of translations.

23.5.1 Temporal VN clauses

Tar éis/i ndiaidh 'after,' *roimh* 'before,' and *ar* 'upon' form time clauses with verbal nouns. If the subject of the verbal noun is mentioned, it is placed in a prepositional phrase with *do*, which may either precede or follow the verbal noun phrase. The VN subject need not be mentioned if it is the same as that of the main clause.

Beidh deoch eile againn roimh imeacht duit.
 'We'll have another drink before you leave.'

Roimh an béile a ithe, bhí deoch acu.
 'Before eating the meal, they had a drink.'

Tar éis a chuid airgid a fháil, d'fhág sé i dtír in Albain iad.
  'After getting his money, he left them ashore in Scotland.'

Tar éis titim do Bhríd, chaith sí seachtain san ospidéal.
  'After Bríd fell, she spent a week in the hospital.'

Tar éis di titim, chaith Bríd seachtain san ospidéal.
  'After she fell, Bríd spent a week in the hospital.'

Simultaneity is expressed with *ar*, *ag*, or *le linn*, with *do* introducing a subject, as above.

Beidh sin agam duit ar fhilleadh duit as Páras.
  'I'll have that for you on your return from Paris.'

Chrom sé síos agus ar éirí dó chonaic sé an bacach.
  'He bent down and as he rose he saw the beggar.'

Ag dul amach do Chiarán, chonaic sé fear an phoist.
  'As Ciarán went out, he saw the postman.'

Bhí sé ag caint liom le linn do Phádraig a bheith amuigh.
  'He was talking to me while Pádraig was out.'

Tharla sé le linn dá dhroim féin a bheith iompaithe.
  'It happened while his own back was turned.'

23.5.2 Verbal nouns of purpose

Le/chun and *i gcomhair* are the most common prepositions introducing non-finite purpose clauses.

Úsáidtear sleán i gcomhair móin a bhaint.
  'A slane is used to cut turf.'

Is iomaí slí atá againn chun é sin a sheachaint.
  'We have many ways to avoid that.'

Tháinig mé anseo le Gaeilge a fhoghlaim.
  'I came here to learn Irish.'

Another structure with *le* and a verbal noun identifies something that should or can be done or is planned for the future.

Bhí tú le troid leis ansin.
'You were supposed to fight him there.'

Tá obair seachtaine agamsa le déanamh.
'I have a week's work to do.'

Ni raibh sí le feiceail in ait ar bith.
'She was not to be seen anywhere.'

Tá mé le pósadh nuair a rachas mé abhaile.
'I am to be married when I go home.'

23.5.3 Causal verbal noun clauses

Some causal complementizers can also be followed by a verbal noun, although this seems to be less common.

Bhíomar fós ann, toisc a bheith ag obair déanach.
'We were still there, because we were working late.'

Mar gheall ar na buachaillí a dhul isteach i ngan fhios dúinn…
'Because the boys had gone in unbeknownst to us…'

23.5.4 Subordinate clauses with agus

Agus frequently introduces non-finite clauses lacking only a tensed form of *bí*. The clause following *agus* thus contains a noun or pronoun and a verbal noun or adjective phrase, or any other element that can be a predicate of *bí* (e.g., an adjective, locative adverb, or prepositional phrase, as described in Section 7.2.2, Chapter 7). These clauses serve as adjuncts to the main verb, and can be translated in a number of ways, according to context. A conjoined form with a tensed form of *bí* is always possible as well, but these adjunct structures are very frequent. Because the subjects of these clauses don't immediately

follow a tensed verb, third-person pronouns have the form *é, í, iad*, without initial *s*, as can be seen below.

Tháinig Ruairí suas leis agus é ag marcaíocht ar a chapall.
  'Ruairí came up to him riding on his horse.'

Tá siad cineál uaigneach anois, agus na páistí imithe.
  'They are a bit lonely now, with the children gone.'

Is féidir linn é sin a phlé agus mé ag réiteach an dinnéir.
  'We can discuss that while I'm making dinner.'

Bhí Proinnsias cloiste againn agus é ag gabhail fhoinn.
  'We heard Proinnsias, humming a tune.'

Bhí solas an lae ghil ann agus iad ag teacht abhaile.
  'Day was breaking as they were coming home.'

Bhí siad amuigh sa gcuan agus muid ag fanacht leis an lá.
  'They were out in the bay, as we waited for day.'

Dódh an teach orthu, agus é tar éis a bheith deanta suas acu.
  'Their house burned down, just after they'd done it up.'

The clause with *agus* sometimes precedes the main clause.

Agus muid ar an mbealach abhaile, thosaigh an bháisteach.
  'On our way home, the rain started.'

Agus í ag breathnú thar an chlaí, chonaic sí an gadaí ag éalú.
  'As she was looking over the wall, she saw the thief escaping.'

Other predicates of *bí* also appear in this structure.

Rachadh sé ann agus dallóg ar a shúile.
  'He could go there blindfolded.'

Bhí stoc ag Páidín agus péire buataisí ag Caomhán agus iad

sásta go leor.
  'Páidín got trousers and Caomhán a pair of boots, and they [were] very pleased.'

  Caitheann sé an iomarca, agus é ina dhochtúir!
  'He smokes too much, although he is a doctor!'

  Tá siad ag fanacht tigh Chóilín, agus iad breá compórdach ann.
  'They are staying at Chóilín's, and are very comfortable there.'

Negative clauses are marked by *gan*, like other negated verbal noun constructions (Chapter 14).

  Thug sé léacht fhada, agus gan rud ar bith nua le rá aige.
  'He gave a long lecture, without anything new to say.'

  Bhí siad sásta go maith leis an oíche, agus gan ach cúpla duine   ann.
  'They were fairly pleased with the evening, although only a couple people were there.'

  Tháinig múr trom uirthi, agus gan uirthi ach seaicéad éadrom.
  'A heavy shower came up, with her wearing only a light jacket.'

Relative clauses

Relative clauses help to narrow the range of individuals to which a noun can refer, often to a single individual; like adjectives, they give additional information about the nouns they describe and for this reason some (especially older) grammars refer to them as adjective clauses.

'the teacher who won the award…'

'the teacher who lives in Hawaii…'

'the teacher whom I met at the conference…'

'the teacher I learned German from…'

In each sentence above, the noun *teacher*, called the *head* noun or *antecedent*, has a role in the modifying clause; in addition, the whole phrase, complete with its relative clause, has a role in some larger sentence.

'The students like the teacher that won the award.'
     (*teacher* = object of *like*; subject of *won*)

'The teacher who lives in Hawaii has left.'
     (*teacher* = subject of *lives* and of *left*)

'I see the teacher whom I met at the conference.'
     (*teacher* = object of *see* and *met*)

'The teacher I learned German from is here.'
     (*teacher* = subject of *is*; object of *from*)

Irish relative clauses (RCs) are formed in two different ways, depending on the role of the head noun in the relative clause.

Direct relative clauses

Clauses where the head noun is subject or direct object of the verb in the RC are known in Irish grammar as *direct relative clauses.* The noun the clause modifies (the *head noun*) comes first, followed by the particle *a,* and lenition on the verb that follows. The position the noun would fill in the clause itself is simply left empty. English relative clauses can be introduced by various words (*who, whom, which, that*) or nothing at all, but in Irish it is always *a* in affirmative clauses (see Section 24.3 below for negative relative clauses).

an múinteoir a fheicim…–'the teacher (whom) I see…'
(cf. **Feicim an múinteoir**)

an múinteoir a fheiceann mé–'the teacher who sees me…'
(cf. **Feiceann an múinteoir mé**)

Since verbs in the past tense are already lenited, their form does not change in relative clauses.

an múinteoir a mhol na daltaí…–'the teacher that the pupils praised…'
(cf. **Mhol na daltaí an múinteoir)**

an múinteoir a mhol na daltaí…–'the teacher who praised the pupils…'
(cf. **Mhol an múinteoir na daltaí**)

Notice that when there is not a subject suffix, or distinct subject and non-subject pronoun forms, the Irish phrase may be ambiguous. It is often possible to tell from context which meaning is intended, however.

Tá is not lenited after *a,* and is joined to it as one word.

an duine atá tinn…   'the person who is sick…'

The *d'* that precedes a vowel and *fh* in the past tense is retained in relative clauses. Irregular pasts, like *fuair,* which are not lenited, remain unlenited in relative clauses.

an bia a d'ith tú…	'the food that you ate…'
an duine a fuair an duais…	'the person who got the prize…'
an duais a fuair sé…	'the prize that he got…'

24.1.1 The relative verb form

In Connacht and Ulster, a special relative ending often replaces present- or future-tense endings in relative clauses. This ending is not used in Munster Irish. Present-tense *-(e)ann* may become *-(e)as* (or *-(e)anns* in Connacht), and future *-f(a)idh* may become *-f(e)as*. The relative form does not replace an ending that includes the subject (e.g., *a fheicim…*).

an múinteoir a mholanns/mholas iad	'the teacher who praises them…'
an múinteoir a fheicfeas tú…	'the teacher that you will see…'

These endings do not appear in negative clauses (see Section 24.3 below), nor in the past tenses. The relative form of *beidh* is *a bheas*. Use of relative endings is completely optional. If an *-s* is heard on the end of a verb in these dialects, however, it's safe to assume that a relative clause is involved.

24.1.2 Multiple clauses

When a relative clause itself contains a subordinate clause normally introduced by *go* plus eclipsis or a dependent form, this clause also changes to the relative clause form. Thus, the first sentence below stands alone, but changes as shown when part of a relative clause.

Cheap mé *go bhfaca* mé duine ansin.	'I thought I *saw* someone there.'

> **Is é Cóilín an duine a cheap mé *a chonaic* mé.**
>   'Cóilín is the person I thought I *saw*.'

When the head noun of a relative clause comes from a sentence containing a verbal noun used progressively, *ag* changes to *a* and lenition applies to the verbal noun.

Tá sé ag déanamh *rud éigin* ansin.	'He's doing *something* there.'
an rud atá sé a dhéanamh ansin…	'*the thing* that he's doing there…'

Indirect relative clauses

When the noun that a relative clause modifies functions within that clause as the object of a preposition or possessor of another noun, the relative clauses are formed differently from those above. These *indirect relative clauses* are described below.

24.2.1 Head noun in prepositional phrase

When the modified noun is the object of a preposition within the relative clause, the particle *a* introduces the clause as usual, but with two differences in what follows.

- the verb is marked by eclipsis rather than lenition
- the preposition takes a prepositional pronoun form matching the noun in gender and number

The relative ending *-s* is never used in these clauses.

Sin é *an teach* a bhfanaim *ann.*
  'That is the house that I stay in.' (Lit. '…in it.')

Sin í *an bhean* a bhfanann siad *léi*–
  'That is the woman they stay with.' (Lit. '…with her.')

Sin iad *na gasúir* a mbeidh tú ag tabhairt an leabhar *dóibh.*
  'Those are the children you'll be giving the book to.' (*to them.*)

Irregular verbs with special dependent forms use those forms in indirect relative clauses, such as the following.

Cé hiad *na daoine* a bhfaca mé *leo* í?
  'Who are the people I saw her with?'

Tá *an fear* a bhfaighidh tú litir *uaidh* ar saoire anois.
  'The man that you'll get a letter from is on holiday now.'

Feicim *na gasúir* a raibh slaghdán *orthu.*
  'I see the children who had a cold.' (Lit.: 'the children who a cold was on them.')

An í sin *an bhean* a bhfuil a fhios *aici* an freagra?
  'Is that the woman who knows the answer?'

Because of the frequency of idioms where the experiencer of a physical or mental state is the object of a preposition, these structures are extremely common in Irish, even though the noun in question may be a subject or object in the English equivalent. What matters is its position in the Irish structure.

24.2.2 An alternative prepositional structure

In formal Irish, mostly written, a structure synonymous with the indirect relative clauses above may be found. In this structure, the preposition is at the front of the clause, preceding *a* (or *ar*), and does not have a pronoun form.

> **an bord ar a bhfuil an leabhar… = an bord a bhfuil an leabhar**
> **air…** 'the table that the book is on…'
>
> **an duine ag a bhfuil an leabhar… = an duine a bhfuil an leabhar aige…** 'the person who has the book…'

Only a few prepositions allow the pre-clausal form, especially *ar, do, in, ag,* and *le. Do + a* becomes *dá,* and *le + a* becomes *lena.*

> **áit ina bhfuil go leor daoine…** 'a place in which there are many people…'
>
> **an bhean lenar labhair tú…** 'the woman with whom you spoke…'
>
> **Rugadh iníon di ar ar bhaist sí Sail**
> 'She gave birth to a daughter whom she named Sail.'

See Section 24.2.4 for the past tense in indirect RCs as in the last two examples above. Clauses such as these have a somewhat archaic, bookish feel to them, and are rare nowadays in the spoken language.

24.2.3 Head noun as possessor

When the head noun is a possessor, English uses a special relative pronoun *whose.* Irish uses the indirect relative clause, with a possessive pronoun matching the head noun in person and number.

Sin é *an fear* **a bhfuair** *a* **bhean bás**
  'That's the man whose wife died.'

Sin í *an bhean* **a bhfuil** *a* **mac tinn.**
  'That's the woman *whose* son is sick.'

Sin iad *na daoine* **ar bhuaigh** *a* **bpáiste an chéad duais.**
  'Those are the people *whose* child won first prize.'

24.2.4 Past tense

When an indirect relative clause contains a regular past-tense verb, the lenition marking the tense is retained, and *a* changes to *ar*.

Sin é *an teach* **ar fhan mé** *ann*.
  'That's the house I stayed *in*.'

Sin í *an bhean* **ar fhan siad** *léi*.
  'That's the woman they stayed *with*.'

Sin iad *na gasúir* **ar thug tú an leabhar** *dóibh*.
  'Those are the children you gave the book *to*.'

Sin iad *na daoine* **ar chuir mé caoi ar** *a* **gcarr.**
  'Those are the people *whose* car I repaired.'

The change to *ar* does not occur with the past tense of those irregular verbs that have a separate past dependent form and use regular particles.

Sin é an teach a raibh siad ina gcónaí *ann*.
  'That's the house they were living *in*.'

Sin í an bhean a bhfuair mé teachtaireacht *uaithi*.
  'That's the woman I got a message *from*.'

Chuaigh siad arís san áit a raibh Dónall.
  'They went again to *where* Dónall was.'

Negative relative clauses

When the verb of a relative clause is negated, *nach* + eclipsis (*n* prefixed to a vowel) is used in place of *a*. In the past tense, *nár* + lenition is used for regular verbs and *nach* + eclipsis for irregular verbs that use *ní* in their past-tense main clauses. The same forms serve both direct and indirect RCs.

an múinteoir nach bhfeicim… 'the teacher I don't see…'

an múinteoir nach bhfeicim a dhalta… 'the teacher whose pupil I don't see…'

an fear nach n-aontaíonn liom… 'the man who doesn't agree with me…'

an fear nach n-aontaim leis… 'the man I don't agree with…'

an múinteoir nach bhfaca sé… 'the teacher that he didn't see….'

an múinteoir nach bhfaca é… 'the teacher who didn't see him…'

an múinteoir nár mhol na daltaí…
  'the teacher who didn't praise the pupils/whom the pupils didn't praise…'

teach nach bhfanaim ann… 'a house that I don't stay in…'

an teach nár fhan mé ann riamh… 'the house I never stayed in…'

na cailíní nach raibh imní orthu… 'the girls who weren't worried…'

an múinteoir nach mbíonn a dhaltaí dána…
  'the teacher whose pupils are not naughty…'

Relative forms of the copula

When the copula appears in relative clauses, it does not change form; *is/ba/nach/nár(bh)* are still used, but *ba* changes to *ab* before a vowel (or *fh*).

an duine is maith liom…	'the person that I like…'
an bia ba mhaith liom…	'the food that I'd like…'
an rud ab fhearr liom…	'the thing I'd prefer…'
rud nach fíor…	'something that's not true…'

Copulas in relative clauses are most common with adjective predicates like those above, or in comparative sentences (Section 18.3, Chapter 18). They tend to be avoided in sentences used to classify or identify individuals, one of the alternative structures with *bí* being more common.

mo dheirfiúr atá ina banrialta… 'my sister who is a nun…'

an t-ollamh atá ar dhuine de scoláirí tábhachtacha na Gaeilge…
'the professor who is one of the important scholars of Irish…'

an bhean atá mar chara liom… 'the woman who is my friend…'

Ar is also the indirect relative form of the copula, used with copula + preposition idioms when they form the basis of a relative clause.

an duine ar leis an carr… 'the person who owns the car…'
(cf. **is le Brian an carr** 'The car is Brian's, Brian owns the car.')

In past-tense relative clauses, the relative forms are *ar(bh)* and *nár(bh)*.

an duine ar leis an carr…	'the person who owned the car…'
an duine arbh fhearr leis tae…	'the person who preferred tea…'
an rud nárbh fhíor…	'the thing that wasn't true…'

Relative clauses and word order

Descriptive clauses like those in the preceding sections can appear in any position of a sentence where simple nouns are found.

Subject:	**Tá an fear a fheicim an-ard.** 'The man that I see is very tall.'

Object:	**Ar léigh tú an leabhar a bhuaigh an duais?–** 'Did you read the book that won the prize?'
Indirect object (recipient):	**Tabharfaidh mé cóip do dhuine ar bith a iarrann é.** 'I'll give a copy to anyone who asks for it.'
Other:	**Tá cónaí orm sa teach a thóg m'athair.** 'I live in the house that my father built.'

However, because noun phrases containing relative clauses can be quite long, it is often stylistically preferable in such cases to place them at the end of a sentence after shorter phrases that would normally follow a simple noun.

Tabharfaidh mé an t-alt sin *duit*. 'I'll give you that article.'
But:
Tabharfaidh mé *duit* an t-alt a scríobh mé faoin gceist sin.
  'I'll give you the article I wrote on that matter.'

Ghearr sé leis an scian *é*. 'He cut it with the knife.'
But:
Ghearr sé *é* leis an scian a fuair sé mar bhronntanas óna dhearstháir.
'He cut it with the knife that he received as a present from his brother.'

Cheannaigh siad teach i gConamara *anuraidh*.
  'They bought a house in Connemara last year.'
But:
Cheannaigh siad teach *anuraidh* san áit a rachaidh muid ar saoire.
'They bought a house last year in the place where we'll go on holiday.'

If a long relative clause modifies a subject, the entire noun phrase may be placed at the beginning of the sentence, thus identifying it as the topic of the sentence to follow; a pronoun referring to the NP fills the normal subject position.

An bhean atá ina cónaí béal dorais, **tá *sí* ag obair sa Státseirbhís anois.**
  'The woman who lives next door is working for the Civil Service now.'

Finally, both subjects and objects modified by relative clauses may be left in place, but the clause itself placed at the end, as in English. This is acceptable only when there is no possibility of misinterpreting which noun the clause modifies, and usually involves indefinite nouns (no article).

Tá *fear* ag an doras *atá ag iarraidh caint leat.*
 'There's *a man* at the door *who wants to talk to you*.'
Chonaic sé *seanchara* an tseachtain seo caite *nach bhfaca sé le blianta.*
 'He saw *an old friend* last week *whom he hadn't seen in years*.'

Information questions

Questions asking for missing information, using words equivalent to *who*, *what*, etc. are also formed with relative clause structures in Irish. The question word is placed first in the sentence, followed by a relative clause introduced by *a*, and lenition or eclipsis of the verb, depending on the question word.

24.6.1 Questioning subjects and objects

The question words for individual people or things are *cé* 'who' and *cad/céard/goidé* 'what.' The choice of forms for *what* is regional: *cad* is used in Munster, *céard* in Connacht, and *goidé* (from *cad é*) in Ulster. They can be used to ask for the identity of either a subject or an object.

Cé atá ansin?	'Who is there?'
Cé a chonaic tú?	'Who(m) did you see?'
Cad a tharla?	'What happened?'
Goidé a chuala tú?	'What did you hear?'
Céard a rinne siad?	'What did they do?'

Because these questions are formed like relative clauses, the special *-s* suffix may also be found on present- and future-tense questions in Ulster and Connacht.

Goidé a bheas ar siúl ar an Déardaoin?
 'What will be happening on Thursday?'

Céard a dhéananns tú i Londain? 'What do you do in London?'

Céard a déarfas na comharsana?   'What will the neighbors say?'

24.6.2 Negative questions

If the verb of the question is negative (which is quite rare), *nach* (*nár* in the past tense of regular verbs) is used.

Cé nach raibh anseo?	'Who was not here?'
Cad nár cheannaigh siad?	'What did they not buy?'

24.6.3 Constituent questions and the copula

Identities are questioned as follows.

Cé hiad sin?	'Who are they?'
Céard é sin?	'What's that?'

(Note that *cé* causes prefixation of *h* to the vowel of a pronoun, which takes the form without *s* because, although a subject, it does not follow a tensed verb.) One can understand the presence of a copula in these questions, but it is never expressed in Irish. Other examples are as follows.

Cén aois tú?	'How old are you?'
Cén t-am é?	'What time is it?'
Cé leis an cóta sin?	'Whose is that coat?/Whose coat is that?'

Questions based on copula + adjective idioms simply place the question word before the copula, since its relative form is the same as the statement form.

Céard ba mhaith leat?	'What would you like?'
Cé is maith leat?–	'Who do you like?'

24.6.4 Choices

When asking the listener to make a choice between two or more individuals, *which* is used in English. This can either stand alone, or be used with a noun. In Irish, these differ in form. *Cé acu*–'which of them' (pronounced and sometimes written as *ciaca*) is used alone as a pronoun; if a noun is specified *cé* combines with the article as *cén* or *cé na* before the noun, with the usual mutations.

Ciaca/Cé acu is fearr leat?	'Which one do you prefer?'
Cén bia is fearr leat?	'Which food do you prefer?'

Cé na daoine a bheidh anseo?	'Which people will be here?'
Cén bhean a bhí ag caint leat?	'Which woman was talking to you?'

24.6.5 Other direct relative questions

Several other questions are formed similarly. These include especially questions related to time: *cén uair* or *cathain* 'when,' *cén fhad* 'how long,' and *cé chomh minic* 'how often.'

Cathain a bhí sé anseo cheana?	'When was he here before?'
Cén uair a thiocfaidh tú ar ais?	'When will you come back?'
Cén fhad a fhanfas siad?	'How long will they stay?'
Cé chomh minic a fheiceann tú í?	'How often do you see her?'

Conas and *goidé mar* 'how' are also followed by the direct relative form, although other words for *how* use a different structure, described below.

Conas atá an obair ag dul ar aghaidh?	'How's the work going?'
Goidé mar a bhí an oíche?	'How was the night?'

24.6.6 Questions as indirect relative clauses

Although some words for *how* use the direct relative structures shown above, others use indirect relative of the verb (no extra pronouns are needed).

Cén chaoi a ndearna sé é?	'How did he do it?'
Goidé an dóigh a ndéanann tú sin?	'How do you do that?'

Other information requested with this structure includes questions about reason, time, and place.

Cén fáth a bhfuil siad anseo?	'Why are they here?'
Cén t-am a mbeidh sé anseo?	'What time will he be here?'
Cá raibh tú aréir?	'Where were you last night?'

Cá, a contraction of *cén áit a*, is almost always the form used for *where* questions in full sentences. It never stands alone, however, but only with a verb. To ask *where?* about something previously mentioned, without a verb, *cén áit* is used.

Buailfidh mé leat amárach.	'I'll meet you tomorrow.
–Ceart go leor. Cén áit?	'Fine. Where?'

Specific locations can also be questioned using particular nouns in place of *áit*.

Cén *teach* a gcónaíonn siad *ann*? 'Which house do they live in?'

Questions asked about objects of prepositions and possessors are also formed according to the rules of indirect relative clauses, i.e., eclipsis or dependent verb form, *ar* for regular past verbs, and a pronoun referring to the head as the object of a preposition or possessor.

Cén teach a bhfanann sibh *ann*? 'Which house do you stay *in*?'

Cén bhean a bhfanann tú *léi*? 'Which woman do you stay *with*?'

Cé na múinteoirí a raibh tú ag caint *leo*? 'Which teachers were you talking *to*?'

Cén chathaoir ar chuir tú an leabhar *uirthi*? 'Which chair did you put the book *on*?'

Cén bhean a bhfuil *a mac* tinn? 'Which woman*'s son* is sick?'

Questions with *who* or *what* as the object of a preposition place the third-person masculine prepositional pronoun at the beginning with the question word. A possessive remains in the clause as usual.

Cé leis **a bhfanann tú?**	'Who do you stay *with*?'
Cé dó **ar thug tú an leabhar?**	'*To whom* did you give the book?'
Cad faoi **a raibh sibh ag caint?**	'*What* were you talking *about*?'
Cé **a bhfuil *a* leabhar ar an urlár?**	'*Whose* book is on the floor?'

Questions with the copula and a preposition place the question word and preposition at the beginning of the sentence; no explicit copula is needed.

Cé leis é? 'Who owns it? Whose is it?'
Cé as thú?
 Or
Cad as duit? 'Where are you from?'

24.6.7 Indirect questions

Indirect relative clauses with head nouns referring to place, time,

manner, or cause can be used as a kind of indirect question (at least in terms of their English translation).

Chuaigh siad arís san áit a raibh Dónall.
  'They went again to where Dónall was.'

Sin é an fáth ar bhuail sé é.   'That's why he hit him.'

Téann an scéal siar go dtí an t-am a raibh Gaeilge beo sa cheantar.
  'That goes back to the time Irish was alive in the district.'

Sin an chaoi a ndearna mé é.   'That's how I did it.'

Emphasis revisited

Cleft sentences, used to highlight a constituent that is the primary focus of attention, were introduced in Chapter 8. They, too, are formed with relative clause structures, as was mentioned then but otherwise glossed over. These follow the same rules elaborated above. The relative verb forms may be found in cleft sentences in regions that use these forms.

A verb phrase or entire sentence itself may also be emphasized using a relative clause after *is amhlaidh* (literally, 'it is thus'). These structures are particularly common in Munster.

Is amhlaidh a bhris sé an fhuinneog.
  'The fact is, he broke the window.'

Is amhlaidh a thitfidh tú!–
  'You're really going to fall!'

Another way to emphasize a verb is with an indirect relative clause following *Sé an chaoi*. This is essentially synonymous with the structures introduced by *is amhlaidh*, but is favored in other areas, e.g., Connacht.

'Sé an chaoi ar ghortaigh sé é féin.   'He actually hurt himself.'
Ab é an chaoi ar shiúil tú ón mbus?   'Did you *walk* from the

bus?'

Adjunct relative clauses

Certain adverbial adjunct clauses are introduced by an RC structure rather than by *go* as described in Chapter 23. The complementizers introducing such clauses, many of them synonymous and varying by region, are too numerous to catalogue completely here, but the following functions illustrate the most common such types of clause.

24.8.1 Temporal clauses

Adverbial complementizers followed by a relative clause introduce some of the most frequent time clauses. These include *nuair* 'when,' *chúns* 'while,' and *(an) fhad (is)/fad (is)* 'as long as,' which can also be used metaphorically.

Nuair a bhain sé an áit amach, bhí siad ag fanacht leis.
'When he reached the place, they were waiting for him.'

Nuair a thiocfas na scadáin, beidh neart le n-ithe againn.
'When the herring come, we'll have plenty to eat.'

D'fhan an lucht éisteachta ciúin chúns a bhí an ceol ar siúl.
'The audience remained quiet while the music was going on.'

Beidh Gráinne anseo fad is atá obair le déanamh.
'Gráinne will be here as long as there is work to be done.'

Tá sibh sábháilte an fhad is nach gcuireann sibh fearg air.
'You are safe as long as you don't anger him.'

24.8.2 Clauses of comparison and correlation

A variety of clauses offering comparisons and correlations between clauses also take the form of direct relative clauses. Comparative adjectives, as described in Section 18.3, Chapter 18, may be followed by a sentential point of comparison, introduced by optional *mar* and a relative clause. Equative structures are introduced by *agus* or its reduced form *is* before the RC.

Tá an geimhreadh níos fuaire i mbliana ná mar a bhí sé riamh.
    'The winter is colder this year than it's ever been.'

Tá níos mó ann ná a bheifí ag súil leis.
    'There is more than one would expect.'

Níl tú chomh neamhurchóideach is a ligeann tú ort.
    'You aren't as innocent as you pretend [to be].'

Various adverbial complementizers, equative in form, introduce the same structure, including *chomh luath is (= agus)* 'as soon as' and *(an) oiread agus*–'as many/much as,' *chomh fada is*–'as long as' (very similar in meaning to *fad is*, above).

Tiocfaidh mé chomh luath is a bheas mé in ann.
    'I'll come as soon as I can.'

Níl oiread airgid aige agus a cheapfá.
    'He hasn't as much money as you would think.'

Tá an oiread daoine sa seomra beag seo is atá sa halla mór.
    'There are as many people in this little room as there are in the big hall.'

Fanfaidh muid anseo chomh fada agus a theastaíonn.
    'We'll stay here as long as necessary.'

Other phrases with similar meaning that introduce adverbial relative clauses in various dialects include *ar nós* 'like,' *fé mar* 'as,' *de réir mar a* 'according as,' *seachas mar* 'as opposed to,' *i gcomórtas mar* 'compared with,' and many more.

Mar was introduced as a causal complementizer in Chapter 23 (Section 23.4.1). When followed by a direct relative clause, it has the meaning *as.*

Fan mar atá tú.   'Stay as you are.'

D'inis sé an scéal dóibh mar a d'inis mise daoibhse.

'He told them the story as I have told you.'

With a conditional form in the subordinate clause, the meaning may shift to *as if* when the translation demands, as in the first example below.

Bhí tú ag stanadh air mar a bheadh taibhse ann.
'You were staring at him as if he were a ghost.'

Thosaigh sé ag insint cé a bheadh ann, mar a déarfá amhrán.
'He started telling who would be there as you'd sing a song.'

Thit sé mar a thitfeadh mála fataí.
'He fell as a sack of potatoes would.'

Thug mé cúnamh dó, mar a dhéanfadh sé domsa.
'I helped him, as he would [help] me.'

In Munster, use of an indirect relative (eclipsis or dependent verb form) after *mar* conveys the meaning *where*. This usage leads to the following contrast.

Fan mar atá tú.	'Stay as you are.'
Fan mar a bhfuil tú.	'Stay where you are.'

Headless relative clauses

Occasionally, relative clauses appear with no noun head at all; these clauses are often introduced by a demonstrative, as below.

Sin atá ar fáil.	'That's what's available.'
Sin a dúirt mé.	'That's what I said.'

Use of an indirect RC form of the verb carries with it an exhaustive interpretation. Compare the following.

Sin atá ann.	'That's what there is.'
Sin a bhfuil ann.	'That's all there is.'

Some further examples of indirect headless clauses with other verbs are given below.

Bíodh a bhfuil fágtha ann agatsa.	'Have the rest (all that's left).'
An é sin a bhfuair tú?	'Is that all you found?'

Tháinig a raibh sa teach amach.   'Everyone who was in the house came out.'

Chapter 25

Conditionals

The verb forms of the conditional mood were introduced with the verb tenses in Chapters 9–12, and some conditional functions have been illustrated in other chapters, including Chapters 15, 23, and 24. These include modal functions indicating uncertainty, expression of the future tense within a past context, and to express hypothetical situations with *as if*. The conditional forms are used more frequently in Irish than in English, appearing in contexts where English translations might well use a different verb form.

Céard a cheapfá faoi sin?	'What do you think of that?'
Ní bheadh mórán suime agam ann.	'I'm not very interested in it.'
Ní dhéanfadh sé an obair.	'He refused to do the work.'
Cé a d'fheicfinn ach Neasa?	'Who should I see but Neasa?'
Ní ghlacfadh sé leis an leithscéal sin.	'He won't accept that excuse.'
B'fhéidir go dtiocfadh sé.	'Maybe he'll come/he might come.'
Thuigfinn cén fáth a d'inis sé bréag.	'I can understand why he lied.'
Ní fear é a chuirfeadh rudaí ar an méir fhada.	'He's not a man likely to put things off.'

The examples so far have illustrated the conditional forms used independently, with any conditions that may apply to make the events real left unspoken. This chapter covers sentences in which the conditions for the event in one clause are explicitly specified in another. Irish uses two types of overt conditional structures, only one of which uses the conditional mood in its verb forms. The first type to be discussed employs other tenses.

Conditions with *má*

In the first type of conditional structure, the speaker assumes that fulfillment of the condition and its consequence is a real possibility, or at worst takes no stand on the outcome. In such cases, the clause specifying the condition on which the remainder of the sentence depends is introduced by *má* 'if,' which causes lenition. In sentences of this type, any indicative tense except the future is possible after *má*,

depending on intended meaning, but the conditional forms are not used. If the time reference of the result clause is future, then the present habitual tense is used in the condition following *má*. Otherwise, the tenses used are much as would be expected in an independent clause.

Má phósann tú leis an mbean sin mé, caillfidh mé mo chiall.
 'If you marry me to that woman, I'll lose my senses.'
Má fheiceann tú amárach í, abair léi glaoch a chur orm.
 'If you see her tomorrow, tell her to give me a call.'
Má tá Treasa sa mbaile, tabhair leat í anocht.
 'If Treasa is at home, bring her with you tonight.'
Má thagann sé ar an gCéadaoin, fanann sé go dtí an Satharn.
 'If he comes on Wednesday, he stays until Saturday.'
Má thug sé faoi deara iad, níor 'úirt sé tada faoi.
 'If he noticed them, he didn't say anything about it.'

Although the clause with *má* usually precedes the clause expressing the outcome, it may also follow.

Tá Páidín le galún a thabhairt dúinn má chríochnaíonn muid an obair.
 'Páidín is to give us a gallon [of whiskey] if we finish the work.'
Maith dom é má bhí díomá orm.
 'Forgive me if I was disappointed.'

A clause introduced by *má* may be used as a response, along the lines of *if so*.

Tháinig Cáit abhaile as Boston.   'Cáit came home from Boston.'
--Má tháinig, ní fhaca mise í.   'If she did, I haven't seen her.'

Another use of *má* in responses is sarcastic, indicating strong doubt or disagreement with a preceding statement.

Tá Rónán deas múinte.   'Rónán is nice and polite.'
−Tá, má tá!   'Yeah, right!'

Má contracts with the copula as *más* in the present/future form and as *má ba* (*má b'* before a vowel) in the past.

Más mian leat, rachaimid chuig an bpictiúrlann anocht.
 'If you like, we'll go to the cinema tonight.'
Más dochtúir thú, tabhair cúnamh dó, le do thoil.

'If you're a doctor, please help him.'

Conditions with *dá*

Conditionals introduced by *má* simply express a dependency between two events, whatever the time reference. The possibility exists that the condition will be fulfilled, along with its outcome. When the events described are hypothetical or contrary to fact, *dá*–'if' is used, and both verbs are in the conditional form. *Dá* is often pronounced, and sometimes written, as *dhá*. It causes eclipsis, or is followed by the dependent form of irregular verbs.

Dá bhfeicfeá é, rachfá i lagar le gáire.
'If you saw it, you'd go weak with laughter.'
Dá mbeadh a fhios agam an freagra, d'inseoinn duit é.
'If I knew the answer, I'd tell you.'
Dá n-aithneodh sé thú, bheannódh sé thú.
'If he recognized you, he'd greet you.'

Time reference is not distinguished in these conditional clauses, which can reflect both hypothetical situations in present time or counterfactual situations in the past. Thus, the above sentences could also be translated as follows: 'If you had seen it, you'd have gone weak with laughter'; 'If I had known the answer, I would have told you'; 'If he had recognized you, he would have greeted you.'

The conditional copula form *ba* is eclipsed regularly after *dá* to form hypothetical and counterfactual clauses.

Dá mba lucht na ceirde sibh, bheadh cuireadh agaibh.
'If you were tradespeople, you'd have had an invitation.'
Dá mba thíos againne a bheadh sibh, bheadh sibh níos compórdaí.
'If you had been down at our place, you'd have been more comfortable.'

A subjunctive verb form may also follow *dá*, although this is increasingly rare, compared to use of the conditional. The first example below is from a well-known traditional song, the others from a 100-year-old manuscript.

Dá n-iontá an stiúir naoi n-uaire ar a tóin, ní choinneodh sí siúl le   Cailleach an Airgid.   'If you turned the rudder nine times at her back, she couldn't keep up with Cailleach an Airgid.'

Is iomdha ceann acu sin a d'ólfá dhá bhfaghtá iad.
'It's many a one of those you would drink, if you could get them.'

D'íosfadh an madadh thú dá dtagtá isteach in aon teach leis.
'The dog would eat you if you should come into the same house with him.'

Negative conditions

If the verb of the condition clause is negated, it is introduced by *mura* (*muna* in some dialects, and *mara* in others), which causes eclipsis and can be translated as *if … not* or *unless. Mura* is used as the negative form of clauses with both *má* and *dá*, so that only the tense choice indicates the type of condition.

Mura bhfuil tú tinn, ba cheart duit a bheith ag obair.
'If you are not sick, you should be working.'

Is féidir linn cupán tae a fháil, mura bhfuil deifir ort.
'We can get a cup of tea, unless you are in a hurry.'

Bíonn laethanta saoire iontacha ansin, mura mbíonn sé ag báisteach.
'Holidays are wonderful there, unless it is raining/if it isn't raining.'

Mura raibh tú sásta, cén fáth nár inis tú dóibh é?
'If you weren't satisfied, why didn't you tell them?'

Mura dtiocfaidh tú, ní fheicfidh tú do mhuintir.
'If you don't come, you won't see your family.'

Mura mbeidh ciall agat, cuirfidh mé fios ar an sagart.
'If you don't show (lit. have) sense, I'll send for the priest.'

Notice that, unlike *má*, *mura* can be followed by a future form of the verb in the condition clause. In the past tense before a regular verb*, r* is added.

Murar ith tú do dhóthain, bíodh tuilleadh agat.
'If you didn't eat enough, have more.'

Murar cheannaigh tú an leabhar, is féidir é a fháil ón leabharlann.
'If you didn't buy the book, you can get it from the library.'

The following are examples of negated hypothetical and counterfactual clauses, which are formed with the conditional in both clauses.

Mura dtaitneodh an bia liom, ní íosfainn é.
'If I hadn't liked the food, I wouldn't have eaten it.'
Mura mbeadh Caitríona tinn, bheadh sí anseo.
'If Caitríona weren't sick, she would be here.'

As with other verbal particles and complementizers, the copula merges with *mura*, which becomes *murab* before a vowel.

Mura leatsa é, ná tóg é.   'If it isn't yours, don't take it.'
Murab iriseoir thú, cén ceird atá agat ar chor ar bith?
'If you aren't a journalist, what is your profession, anyway?'

The past/conditional negative is *murar* before a consonant, *murarbh* before a vowel.

Murar múinteoir maith é, ní bheadh sé ag obair anseo.
'If he weren't a good teacher, he wouldn't be working here.'
Murar thiar a bheadh sé níl a fhios agam cá mbeadh sé.
'If he wasn't in the west, I don't know where he'd be.'
Murarbh in Éirinn a bheadh sé, cá mbeadh sé?
'If he wasn't in Ireland, where would he be?'
Murarbh fhéidir leat é a dhéanamh ba cheart duit cúnamh a fháil.
'If you couldn't do it, you should have got help.'

The forms of *if* and *if not* in copula clauses display considerable variation between and even within a dialect; those given above are the standard forms, most likely to be found in written Irish, but not always what one would hear.

Verbal noun conditionals

Similar in form to the verbal noun clauses with *agus* introduced in Chapter 24, a clause introduced by *ach* 'but' and including all elements of a sentence except the tensed verb *bí* conveys conditional meaning *if only, provided that.* Any verbal elements take the form of a verbal noun. Negation is marked with *gan* in such clauses.

Tiocfaidh sé ach fios a chur air.
  'He will come provided he is sent for.'
Beidh mé sásta ach an tsláinte a bheith agam.
  'I'll be happy if only I have my health.'
Tá sé ceart go leor ach gan fearg a chur air.
  'He is all right if he is not angered.'

Murach

A related form, *murach*, followed by a noun, can be used to mean *if it weren't for*, *but for*.

Bheidís uilig báite murach Colm.
  'They would all have drowned but for Colm.'
Murach tusa, bheadh an cluiche caillte againn.
  'If it hadn't been for you, we'd have lost the game.'
Thaitneodh an Spáinn liom, murach an teas.
  'I'd have liked Spain, but for the heat.'

The noun following *murach* may be a verbal noun, including a whole VN clause:

Murach an lá a bheith fliuch, d'fhéadfá dul chuig an trá.
  'Except that the day is wet, you could go to the beach.'
Murach Gearóid a bheith i ngrá léi, ní bheadh duine ar bith againn ag caitheamh ama ina cuideachta.
  'But for Gearóíd being in love with her, none of us would spend time in her company.'

Murach is also followed by a tensed clause on occasion.

Bheinn ag an tsochraid murach go bhfuil mé thar sáile–.
  'I would be at the funeral, except that I'm overseas.'

Emphasis

To stress the importance of a condition, the *if* clause may be augmented by various phrases, the most common of which are *más amhlaidh a* (+relative clause), *más rud é go*, and *má tharlaíonn go*.

Más amhlaidh a thug sé faoi deara iad, níor lig sé air é.
  'If in fact he noticed them, he didn't let on.'
Más rud é go bhfuil tú tinn, fan sa bhaile.
  'If it is a fact that you are sick, stay home.'
Má tharlaíonn go dtiocfaidh tú, cuir glaoch orm.
  'If you happen to come, call me.'

The negative form is *mura rud é go*.

Mura rud é go bhfuil tú tinn, ba cheart duit a bheith ag obair.
  'If you aren't actually sick, you should be working.'

The hypothetical or counterfactual nature of a clause can likewise be reinforced with *dá mba rud é*. Tensed clauses following *murach* (cf. Section 25.4) can also have the effect of strengthening the condition.

Dá mba rud é go n-aithneodh sé thú, bheannódh sé thú.
  'If he had in fact recognized you, he'd have greeted you.'
Ligfinn isteach thú murach go n-íosfadh an madadh thú.
  'I'd let you in if it weren't for the fact that the dog would eat you.'

In responses to statements, *féin* may be added to a conditional clause to indicate the sense *even so/even if*.

Rinne sí gáire, ach má rinne féin, bhí sí beagán scanraithe.
  'She laughed but, even so, she was a little scared.
Má tá sé bocht féin, tá sé flaithiúil.
  'Even if he is poor, he is generous.'

Rhetorical uses

Conditional forms are used for rhetorical effect, as in the following example.

Tá sé caoga má tá sé lá!   'He's fifty [years old] if he's a day!'

Clauses introduced by *dá* often occur without a follow-up clause, leaving a consequence of the condition unstated or implied.

Dá bhfeicfeá iad!   'If you could have seen them!'

Dá mbeadh a fhios agat.   'If you only knew.'

As a response, nothing more than *dá* and the repeated verb can signal
a wish that the statement were true.

  Níl sibh chomh saibhir sin, is dócha.
   –Dá mbeadh!
    'You are not so rich, I suppose.'
    'I wish we were!/If only!'

Concluding chapters

Extra-sentential material

The last two chapters cover topics that are not part of sentence grammar proper, but that are nonetheless important aspects of language use. Chapter 26 discusses personal and place names, which display their own structural patterns drawing on grammatical forms introduced in earlier chapters. Chapter 27 contains a miscellany of discourse structures and particles, greetings and other fixed expressions that often stand alone, but can greatly enhance conversational Irish when used appropriately.

Names

Irish surnames are in some ways quite different from those found in the English-speaking world, and have a grammatical structure that further illustrates some of the grammar points covered in the preceding chapters. This unit introduces Irish surnames and the ways they differ from their anglicized forms. Place names also display some of the typical structures of noun phrases (as in Chapter 16) and will be presented briefly along with some discussion of how the names have been anglicized.

Men's surnames

Irish uses a patronymic system of assigning surnames after one's father or another relative; this system accounts for the majority of traditional surnames. These begin with one of the prefixes *Mac*–'son' or *Ó/Ua*–'descendant, grandson.' The given name that follows is in the genitive case; *Mac Néill* is literally 'son of Niall' and *Ó Néill* is 'descendant of Niall.' Some names tend to favor one prefix or the other, but others can be found with either, depending on the family. Some common patronymic names are listed below, with common anglicized versions that may be better known outside Ireland. Some anglicizations omit the prefix while others retain it.

Mac Donncha	McDonagh
Ó Donncha	(O')Donahue
Ó Flaithearta	(O')Flaherty
Mac Carthaigh	McCarthy
Mac Suibhne	(Mc)Sweeney
Mac Bríde	McBride
Ó hEadhra	O'Hara
Ó Murchú	Murphy
Ó Broin	Byrne

Nowadays, surnames are transmitted from generation to generation unchanged, so Seán Mac Néill's father would not necessarily have been named Niall, but some ancestor probably was.

Other patronymic names refer to the profession or religious affiliation of the ancestor.

Table 26.1 Professional surnames

Irish	English	Translation
Mac an Bhaird	Ward	'son of the bard (poet)'
Mac an tSaoi	McGinty	'son of the wise man'
Mac Gabhann	McGowan, Smith	'son of the blacksmith'
Mac Giolla Easpaig	Gillespie	'son of the devotee of the bishop'

Surnames with *Giolla,* and also those beginning with *Maol,* often refer to followers of particular churchmen or saints, whose names may be obscured in the anglicized forms.

Mac Giolla Phádraig	'Kilpatrick'
Mac Giolla Phóil	'Guilfoyle'
Ó Maoil Chiaráin	'Mulkern'
Ó Maoil Eoin	'Malone'

A very few Irish names have no prefix. Among the best-known are the following.

Breatnach	'Walsh' (Welshman) or 'Branagh'
Seoighe	'Joyce'
Caomhánach	'Kavanaugh'

Finally, a number of names brought in by the Normans are French in origin, but they have been thoroughly gaelicized and are now as Irish as any others. Some were gaelicized using the *Mac* prefix, often anglicized as *Fitz-* from the French equivalent *fils,* but others retained the French form *de,* which also refers to lineage.

Mac Gearailt	'Fitzgerald'
Mac an Rí	'Fitzroy, King'
de Búrca	'Bourke'
de Brún	'Browne'
de Paor	'Power'

Names can be converted to nouns ending in *ach* when referring to a person with that name. The prefix is dropped, and the definite article is used. The effect is similar to that of referring to a person by his surname only in English.

an Flaitheartach	'Ó Flaithearta, O'Flaherty'
an Suibneach	'Mac Suibhne, Sweeney'
an Seoigheach	'Seoighe, Joyce'
an Búrcach	'de Búrca, Bourke'

Ba scríobhneoir cáiliúil é an Seoigheach.
  'Joyce was a famous writer.'
Beidh lá eile ag an bPaorach.
  'De Paor will have another day.' (Proverb meaning there will be a
second chance.)

Women's surnames

Traditional versions of women's names are introduced by the feminine
form of *Mac* or *Ó*, namely *Nic* or *Ní*, derived from the phrases *Iníon
Mhic* and *Iníon Uí*–'daughter of Mac/Ó.' The feminine prefixes cause
lenition of the name that follows, except that *Nic* and *Mhic* usually do
not lenite names beginning with *c* or *g*. This is a similar principle to
that blocking lenition of *t, d, s* after *n*; although not recognized in the
Official Standard, non-lenition is practiced widely and is mentioned in
other grammars. Unlike the prefix *Ó*, *Ní* does not prefix *h* to vowels.
Here are the female versions of the names given above:

Nic Dhonncha	'MacDonagh'
Ní Dhonncha	'O'Donahue'
Ní Fhlaithearta	'O' Flaherty'
Nic Carthaigh	'McCarthy'
Nic Shuibhne	'(Mc)Sweeney'
Nic Bhríde	'McBride'
Ní Eadhra	'O'Hara'
Ní Mhurchú	'Murphy'

Names lacking prefixes and based on adjective forms ending in *-ach*
are also lenited when used by women, e.g., *Bhreatnach, Chaomhánach*.
Other surnames are identical for men and women, e.g., *de Búrca,
Seoighe*.

Traditionally, women did not change their surnames upon marriage.
In recent times, under English influence, some women have taken
their husbands' names, in which case the titles *Bean Mhic* and *Bean Uí*
('Wife of Mac/Ó') are used. *Bean* is sometimes dropped.

Aíne (Bean) Mhic Dhonncha	'Mrs. Áine MacDonagh'
Bríd (Bean) Uí Mhurchú	'Mrs. Bríd Murphy'
Máire (Bean) de Brún	'Mrs. Máire Browne'

Local names

Irish surnames tend to be associated with particular counties. It is
therefore common to find several families with the same name in a
single community. Moreover, traditional given names tend to be

favored in family after family (at least until quite recently), so a small Gaeltacht community might well house more than one person with exactly the same name. This is rarely a problem, however, because most people in such communities are known locally not by their official surnames, but by a local community nickname, or *leasainm*, based on their father's (or another relative's) given name or on a particular personal characteristic. Suppose that one family named *Ó Conaire* has offspring named *Pádraig, Bríd, Séamas* and *Liam*, while another *Ó Conaire* family includes *Seán, Pádraig, Máire,* and *Bríd*: two *Pádraig Ó Conaires* and two *Bríd Ní Chonaires*. However, locally, each group would be known by a different *leasainm*. Suppose the father of the first group is named *Séamas*, and the father of the second group is *Colm*. The next generation might be known locally as follows.

Table 26.2 Local names (*leasainmneacha*)

Children of Séamas Ó Conaire	Children of Colm Ó Conaire
Pádraig Shéamais	Pádraig Choilm
Bríd Shéamais	Bríd Choilm
Séamas Shéamais	Máire Choilm
Liam Shéamais	Seán Choilm

The father's name is in the genitive form and lenited after all first names, male or female. Some local names may go back two generations, so one also finds names such as *Nan Phádraig Choilmín* and *Cóilín Phádraig Choilmín*, real siblings whose father was *Pádraig Choilmín*. The formal surname *Ó Conghaile* (*Ní Chonghaile*) would be rarely used in the community. *Cóilín*'s children are known locally as *Pádraig Choilín, Áine Chóilín,* etc, while *Nan*'s (their cousins) are known by a name taken from their father's side of the family: *Pádraig Sheáinín, Áine Sheáinín,* etc. So even where names are duplicated within a family, the identities of households are distinguished.

Another relative's name is sometimes used, especially if that relative had an important role in the family's upbringing. It may be a mother, aunt or uncle, or grandparent. Thus, women's names might appear in the *leasainm* for particular families; if, for example, they were raised primarily by a widowed mother named *Máirín*, a family might be known as *Bríd Mháirín, Pádraig Mháirín,* etc.

Finally, some individuals have local names based on a particular characteristic, physical, professional, or geographical. The following are examples.

Liam an Phoist	'Liam the post(man)'
Colm an Garda	'Colm the policeman'
Paddy an Veain	'Paddy the van (driver)'
Colm Dubh	'Black-haired Colm'

Máire Chatach	'Curly-haired Máire'
Pádraig Ráth Chairn	'Pádraig from Ráth Chairn'

Outside the local setting, both surname and local name may be used, as in the case of *Seán Bán Breathnach*, a well-known media personality; however, locally, the official surname is normally restricted to use in official contexts, rather than everyday usage.

Vocative case with names

The vocative case with common nouns was introduced in , but is used most frequently with proper names. All vocative names, like common nouns, are introduced by the particle *a*, and the first consonant is lenited.

a Dhiarmaid!	'Diarmaid!'
a Threasa!	'Treasa!'
a Chaoimhín	'Caoimhín!'
a Dheirdre	'Deirdre!

Most names, like those above, do not have a distinct case form following the vocative particle, apart from the lenition it triggers. However, masculine nouns ending in a broad consonant have a separate vocative form, which is identical to their genitive, i.e., with a slender final consonant.

Table 26.3 Vocative Names

Common case	Vocative case
Séamas	a Shéamais
Seán	a Sheáin
Tomás	a Thomáis
Peadar	a Pheadair
Dónall	a Dhónaill
Colm	a Choilm
Pól	a Phóil
Brian	a Bhriain
Mícheál	a Mhíchíl

Note the exceptional vowel change from *á* to *í* in the last example.

Adjectives used with nouns in the vocative case have the same form as the genitive (including lenition) when they occur with masculine singular nouns. Otherwise, the vocative adjective form is unchanged from the basic citation form.

A Pheadair Mhóír!	'Big Peadar!'
A Mháirín Óg!	'Young Máirín!'

It should be noted that in many dialects, the use of case-marked adjectives is on the decline and the common case forms may be found as well in certain contexts (Ó Sé 1995; Ó Baoill 1996; Ó Murchú 1998; Ó Buachalla 2003).

Place names

Irish place names also have their own syntactic structure, which is that of a noun phrase. Like personal names, they typically have distinct Irish and English versions. Most, but not all, English versions of place names rely on transliteration (anglicizing the pronunciation and respelling it, ignoring the meaning of the name). Traditional Irish place names are typically composed of phrases that include a term referring to some geographical feature (a hill, valley, lake, etc.) or architectural structure of note in the region (church, castle, fort), followed by a descriptive term or name. The repeated use of certain geographical terms gives Irish place names their characteristic flavor.

Baile–'town(land), village' is one of the most common initial terms. It combines with various other words.

Adjectives:	**An Baile Glas**	'Ballyglass' (lit. 'green village')
Names:	**Baile an Fheirtéaraigh**	'Ballyferriter' (lit. Ferriter's town)
Other nouns:	**Baile an Tobair**	'Ballintober' (lit. 'town of the well')

A second noun in such cases takes the genitive form (Chapter 16). It may be further modified, leading to still longer names, including most famously the Irish name of Dublin: *Baile Átha Cliath*–'the town of the ford of the hurdles.'

Two other extremely common components of placenames are *cill*–'churchyard' and *áth*–'ford.'

Cill Íseal	'Killeeshill' (lit. 'low churchyard')
Cill Bhríde	'Kilbride' (lit. 'Bridget's churchyard')
Cill an Mhuilinn	'Killavullen' (lit. 'churchyard of the mill')
Áth Dara	'Adare' (lit. 'oak ford')
Áth na mBó	'Annamoe' (lit. 'ford of the cows')

Two geographical elements may combine with each other.

Baile Átha Buí.	'Athboy' (lit. town of the yellow ford').
Béal an Átha	'Ballina' (lit. 'mouth of the ford')
Droichead Átha	'Drogheda' (lit. 'bridge of the ford')

Not every place name has multiple words. Single-word names occur either with or without the article *an*.

Luimneach	'Limerick'
Gaillimh	'Galway'
An Cnoc	'Knock'
An Daingean	'Dingle'

English versions of the names above are based on transliteration, the commonest form of anglicization. Although all the Irish names have meanings, they are not always transparent in the transliterations. Other names are translated directly into English, preserving their meaning but not their form. Some examples include the following.

Áth Cinn	'Headford'
Áth an Mhuilinn	'Milford'
Baile an Droichid	'Bridgetown'
An Charraig Dhubh	'Blackrock'

Still others rely on a combination of transliteration and translation.

Baile an Chaisleáin	'Ballycastle' (**caisleán** = castle)
Contae na hIarmhí	'County Westmeath' (**Iar** = west)
Áth na Sráide	'Stratford'

For some placenames, the Irish and English versions seem to bear no relation to each other. *Baile Átha Cliath* 'Dublin' is one example. Others include the following.

Port Láirge	'Waterford'
Loch Garman	'Wexford'
Cill Mhantáin	'Wicklow'
Neidín	'Kenmare'
Cathair na Mart	'Westport'
Cluain Charbháin	'Louisburgh'
An Teach Dóite	'Maam Cross'

Finally, a few place names are found only in their Irish version and are not anglicized at all.

Port Laoise	'Port Laoise'
Dún Laoghaire	'Dún Laoghaire'
Cobh	'Cobh'

Formulaic phrases and discourse markers

Language use includes not only full sentences, but often a variety of extra-sentential words and phrases that don't form part of the ordinary syntactic structure of sentences such as was covered in the preceding grammar sections, but which help to advance a discourse through social niceties, markers of turn-taking and other indicators of the speaker's view of a conversation and the participants' roles. This chapter describes a few of the Irish conventions for such language.

Greetings

Basic Irish greetings vary with the number of people being addressed and also with which participant in the greeting speaks first. The most common greeting, equivalent to English *hello*, is:

Dia duit (to one person)
Dia daoibh (to more than one person)

The standard reply by the person or persons so addressed is

Dia's Muire duit (to one person)
Dia's Muire daoibh (to more than one)

Literally these mean *God be with you,* and the reply *God and Mary be with you,* but any religious connotation has been lost for most speakers. On occasion a speaker may start with *Dia's Muire duit/ daoibh,* in which case the response is *Dia's Muire duit/daoibh, agus Pádraig.*

Another traditional greeting is *Bail ó Dhia ort* 'God prosper you.' This is particularly common when the greeter encounters people engaged

in some activity, in which case it takes the form *Bail ó Dhia ar an obair* 'God prosper the work.' It is often used following a compliment, as in *Tá tú ag breathnú go maith, bail ó Dhia ort* 'You're looking well, God prosper you' or *Tá an leanbh go hálainn, bail ó Dhia uirthi* 'The baby is beautiful, God bless her.'

Haló (sometimes *heileo*) and *haigh* are also used as greetings with growing frequency among young bilingual speakers, but the traditional greetings remain the most common. However, *haló* is the conventional form used to answer the telephone.

Expressions for *How are you?* vary considerably from region to region. The Official Standard form, *Conas atá tú?*, is close, but not identical, to the Munster expression *Conas taoi?* or *Conas atánn tú?* In Connacht, the usual expression is *Cén chaoi a bhfuil tú?* and in Ulster it is *Goidé mar atá tú?* The commonest answer is, as in English, to say that one is well: *Tá mé go maith*, or, more formally, *Go maith, slán a bheas tú.*

Another common way of starting a conversation is to ask what's new: *Cén scéal? Cén scéal agat?* or, more formally (and infrequently), *An bhfuil scéal nua agat?* 'Have you any news (lit. a new story)?' A common response to this question is *Diabhal scéal* 'No news' or *Diabhal scéal, mura bhfuil ceann agat féin*–'No story, unless you have one yourself.' Or one might respond *Diabhal scéal, ach go…/Scéal ar bith, ach…* 'No story, except that…' and go on to relate an item of news.

Leave-taking likewise has a grammar of its own. To someone who is departing, one says *slán leat* (to one) or *slán libh* (to more than one). To those remaining, the expression is *slán agat* (one) or *slán agaibh* (more than one). These are often reduced simply to *slán* or *slán go fóill*–'good-bye for now.'

It is also common to say *Feicfidh mé thú/sibh*–'See you' or *Feicfidh mé ar ball thú/sibh*–'See you later,' either with or without *slán*.

The standard greeting in a letter is the vocative of the addressee's name, followed by *a chara*, 'friend.'

a Shorcha, a chara	'Dear Sorcha'

In official letters, letters to the editor of a newspaper, etc., the phrase *a chara* is often used alone, and serves as the equivalent of *dear sir or madam* or *to whom it may concern.* A common closing phrase before the signature is *Mise le meas*–'I am, respectfully…'

Other formulaic expressions

The phrases in this section include common expressions to address various situations in which one might find oneself.

27.2.1 Thanks

The noun for 'thanks' or 'gratitude,' *buíochas* is not the most common form for direct expression of thanks. Instead, the phrases below are most frequent.

Go raibh maith agat	'thank you' (to one person)
Go raibh maith agaibh	'thank you' (to more than one)
Go raibh míle maith agat/agaibh	'thanks very much'

More rarely, one might hear *míle buiochas* 'a thousand thanks,' or, more formally, *Tá mé buíoch díot/díbh*–'I am grateful to you.' *Buíochas* is also found in the phrase *Buíochas le Dia*–'thank God,' used as in English for expressing relief about a particular situation. To specify the reason for the thanks, the preposition *as* is used.

Go raibh maith agat as an gcúnamh.	'Thanks for the help.'

The usual response to thanks is *fáilte romhat* 'you're welcome,' although it is perhaps less common than in English to respond to thanks. Other very informal possibilities are *ná habair é* 'don't mention it' and *ná bac* 'don't worry.'

In making predictions, the phrase *le cúnamh/cuidiú Dé*–'with God's help' is often added.

Feicfidh mé sibh an tseachtain seo chugainn, le cúnamh Dé.
   'I'll see you next week, please God.'

27.2.2 Good wishes and blessings

Many other situations call for expressions of good will that may be specific to the occasion. Expressions of welcome also use *fáilte romhat* addressed to one person, or *fáilte romhaibh* to more than one. This may sometimes be expanded to *céad fáilte* 'a hundred welcomes,' *míle fáilte* 'a thousand welcomes,' or *céad míle fáilte* 'a hundred thousand welcomes,' the latter quite common in tourism settings.

For travel wishes, *Go n-éirí an bóthar leat* (*libh* for plural) is the Irish

version of *bon voyage.* Often translated literally as *May the road rise with you,* this is actually an instantiation of a more general wish for success, in this case on the road (*éirigh le* is an idiomatic usage meaning *succeed*). A similar wish for success in any other endeavor takes the same form.

Go n-éirí an t-adh leat (or **libh**).   'Good luck.'

Congratulations are expressed by *Comhghairdeas*, or sometimes *Comhghairdeachas*.

In response to a sneeze the blessing *Dia linn* 'God with us' or *Dia linn agus Muire* 'God and Mary with us' is used.

Praise for an achievement or performance (common in informal musical performances, for example) can be expressed in a variety of ways, among them the following.

Dia (go deo) leat!	'God be with you (forever)!'
Féar-plé (= *fair play*) **duit!**	'Good for you!'
Maith thú!	'Good for you!'
Maith an fear/maith an bhean/maith an cailín/maith an buachaill!	'Good man/woman/girl/boy!'

More formally and with perhaps a somewhat archaic touch, one finds expressions such as the following.

Nár laga Dia thú.	'May God not weaken you.'
Nár laga Dia do lámh.	'May God not weaken your hand.'

Encouragement to continue with a performance, song, recitation, or commentary can be offered with the phrases above, or simply with the following.

Coinnigh ort!	'Go on!'
Ar aghaidh leat!	'Go ahead'

The usual toast is *sláinte* 'health,' or *sláinte mhaith!* A longer version heard on occasion, with a nod to the large Irish emigrant population, is:

Sláínte mhaith, saol fada, agus bás in Éirinn.
  'Good health, a long life, and death in Ireland.'

The primary bedtime wish is *oíche mhaith* 'good night.' If desired, *codladh sámh* 'sleep well' can be added.

27.2.3 Apologies and expressions of regret

A useful all-purpose apology for a minor offense, whether verbal or physical (e.g., inadvertently bumping into someone) is:

Gabh mo leithscéal.   'Excuse me.'

This phrase is also used to get someone's attention, e.g., prior to asking a question or making a comment.

More serious apologies might be expressed by:

Tá aiféala orm.   'I'm sorry.'
Tá brón orm.   'I'm sad.'

To ask forgiveness explicitly, one can say *Maith dom* 'forgive me,' and the response is *Maithim duit* 'I forgive you.'

For condolences in cases of bereavement, the usual expression is *Ní maith liom do thrioblóid* 'I'm sorry for your trouble.'

A general all-purpose comment on an unhappy or difficult situation is *Is mór an trua é* 'It's a great pity, it's too bad.' This can also introduce a clause specifying what one is sorry about.

Is mór an trua go bhfuil an lá inniu fliuch.
  'It's a shame the day is wet.'
Is mór an trua nach mbeidh tú anseo an tseachtain seo chugainn.
  'It's too bad you won't be here next week.'

27.2.4 Introductions

The simplest way to present one person or more to another is with *seo* (*é/í/iad*) and the name or other identity of the person(s) being introduced.

Seo é Cathal.   'This is Cathal.'
Seo í máthair Chaitríona.   'This is Caitríona's mother.'
Seo iad mo chomharsana béaldorais.   'These are my next-door neighbors.'

A widespread alternative is simply to ask:

An bhfuil aithne agt ar Chathal Mac Gearailt?
  'Do you know Cathal Mac Gearailt?'

Responses to the introduction might be a standard greeting, like *Dia duit* or *Cén chaoi a bhfuil tú?* Some say:

Tá áthas orm casadh/castáil leat.	'I'm happy to meet you.'

27.2.5 Holiday greetings

A generic holiday greeting that may be used for most any occasion is *beannachtaí na féile duit* (*daoibh* for more than one person) 'greetings of the season' (literally 'holiday'). More holiday-specific greetings may include the name of the occasion in the same formula: *Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig* 'Happy St.Patrick's Day.' Others have different forms, e.g.:

Nollaig shona duit (daoibh).	'Happy Christmas.'
Athbhliain (faoi shéan 'is) faoi mhaise duit (daoibh).	'Happy New Year.'
Lá breithe sona duit (daoibh).	'Happy birthday.'

27.2.6 Requests and offers

Offers of food, drink, or other gifts or entertainment can take a variety of forms, most commonly the following.

Ar mhaith leat cupán tae?	'Would you like a cup of tea?'
An ólfaidh tú cupán tae?	'Will you drink a cup of tea?
An mbeidh cupán tae agat?	'Will you have a cup of tea?'

Responses repeat the verb or its negation, as outlined in Chapter 6. On occasion, *beidh* or (especially) *ní bheidh*, may be used to accept or refuse offers in other forms, including non-verbal ones, such as a response to someone passing a plate of food, or gesturing with a teapot, or uttering a sentence fragment, such as *cupán tae?* For any of these, an appropriate response would be:

Ní bheidh, go raibh maith agat.	'No thanks.'
Beidh, más é do thoil é.	'Yes, please.'

To make an indirect request, one might use *ba mhaith liom* 'I would like' or *ba bhreá liom* 'I would love.' A preference for something other than what is offered, or when offered a choice, could take the form *b'fhearr liom…*'I would prefer…'

More directly, a request for action of some sort can take the form of a question with the conditional form of the verb, with the possible addition of *más e do thoil é*'please' for greater politeness.

An ndúnfá an doras, más é do thoil é?	'Would you please close the door?'

The rather less frequently used plural forms of *go raibh maith agat* and *más é do thoil é* are *go raibh maith agaibh* and *más e bhur dtoil é*, respectively.

An alternative form for a polite request uses *an miste leat/libh?* 'do you mind?' More indirect requests use the conditional form of the question: *ar mhiste leat/libh?* 'would you mind?' Both are followed by a verbal noun structure.

An miste leat an fhuinneog a oscailt?	'Do you mind opening the window?'
Ar mhiste leat cúnamh a thabhairt dom?	Would you mind helping me?'

To indicate willingness to do what is asked, the reply is *ní miste* or *níor mhiste* 'I don't/wouldn't mind.'

27.2.7 Emotive exclamations

Exclamations of mild surprise, approval, or dismay are reasonably common and include the following.

Dia (go deo) leat!	'God be with you (forever)!' (approval of a performance)
Go sábhála Dia sinn!	'God save us!' (dismay)
Dia dár réiteach!	'God help us!'
Go bhfóire Dia orainn!	'God have mercy on us!' (surprise, dismay)
A Mhaighdean!	'Virgin!'
A dhiabhal (go deo)!	'Good grief!' (Lit. 'Devil (forever)!')

More mildly, *A thiarcais!* 'My goodness!' or *Muise!* 'Indeed! My, my!' may be used. *Muise* is particularly common, indicating interest or mild surprise.

A: Is as Meiriceá í, agus tá Gaeilge aici. B: Muise!
  A: 'She's from America and she speaks Irish'. B: 'My, my!'

27.2.8 Narrative conventions

Storytelling has traditionally been a strong oral art form in Ireland, although it is now showing signs of dying out. However, it is promoted at festivals honoring the verbal arts, such as *Oireachtas na Gaeilge,* held every year at the end of October. As a result some of the conventions of storytelling form are alive and known to speakers. Traditional beginnings and endings can be very elaborate and vary with the storyteller; only a few simple versions will be presented here.

Stories often begin with a sentence including the word *fadó*–'long ago.' Examples include the following.

Fadó, fadó, agus fadó a bhí…   'Once upon a time…'
Bhí bean ann fadó…   'There was once a woman…'

Endings often include *sin é mo scéal* 'that's my story,' although that is often only part of the concluding sentence. The following is one example.

Sin é mo scéal agus más bréag é, ní mise a chum é.
'That's my story and if it's a lie, I didn't think it up.'

More elaborate versions, often particular to individual storytellers, are also typical.

A common device used in the middle of narratives, as a kind of place-keeping device to help the storyteller remember what's next or catch his breath is the following.

Bhí go maith agus ní raibh go holc…   'That was good, and it wasn't bad…'

This is often used at a point of change in the narrative, and can be thought of as a sort of oral chapter marker.

Quotations are common, not only in formal storytelling, but also in many colloquial narratives. The following forms are used to identify quotations, usually following the sentence quoted.

…arsa an prionsa   '…said the prince'
…ar sé   '…he said'
…a deir sé   '…he said'

A deir sé is the usual colloquial quotative in conversational Connacht Irish. *Arsa* (*ar* before *sé*, *sí*, *siad*) is found in formal storytelling style in Connacht and is still in use colloquially in other dialect areas. e.g., Munster.

Discourse markers

Discourse markers are words and phrases that help manage the flow of a conversation, connecting sentences to each other and to the wider context of the discourse. These markers often appear at the beginning (sometimes end) of a sentence or clause and fall outside the sentence grammar proper, but help to provide cohesion in the larger dialogue.

They have only recently received serious attention from grammarians, and are notoriously difficult to define with precision. Some examples of discourse markers in English are words like *oh*, *OK*, *y'know*, *anyway*, *actually*. Others may have specific grammatical uses within the context of sentence grammar, but are used in addition as discourse markers, including *well*, *so*, *right*, and *now*. This section offers a mere taste of the range of Irish discourse markers, which have received even less attention than those of English.

27.3.1 Turn-taking and topic management

In this category can be included a number of markers indicating that a new speaker is taking a turn, or that what comes next is a new topic. These include *dála an scéil* 'by the way,' *Fan go gcloisfidh tú* 'Wait till you hear,' and *Fan go n-inseoidh mé duit* 'Wait till I tell you.'

> **Dála an scéil, bhí Siobhán anseo aréir, agus dúirt sí...**
>   'By the way, Siobhán was here last night, and she said...'
> **Fan go gcloisfidh tú! Bhuaigh Diarmaid an Lotto!**
>   'Wait till you hear! Diarmaid won the Lotto!'

The phrase *ar ndóigh* 'of course' can also be used to signal more subtle shifts of topic or perspective within a narrative, or to mark a new development in the story. The shift may be from one speaker to another, or to an action or comment in response to a previous utterance, or it may simply mark the beginning of a new episode of the story.

> **An bhfuair tú aon bhall den éadach?**
>   **–Ar ndóigh, fuair mé treabhsar.**
>   'Did you get any piece of the clothing?
>   –Well, I got a pair of trousers.'

> **"Téigh abhaile agus abair leo..." Ar ndóigh tháinig Conan abhaile...**
>   '"Go home and tell them..." So Conan came home...'

> **Casadh planc dhóibh. Ar ndoigh chrochadar leo é...**
> 'They came upon a plank. So they carried it off with them...'

Ní raibh poll na scailp le cladach nach raibh fear ann. Ar ndóigh, mar gach fear, chuala Mánas é...
   'There wasn't a hole or cave without a man in it. Now, like everyone, Mánas heard it...'

Another use of *ar ndóigh* is to identify the speaker's own assessment of the situation under discussion. Other forms that function similarly include *acha* (from *féach* 'look') and *óra.*

"Níl a fhios agam céard a d'éirigh don doras... bhí doras ar an teach seo inné," arsa Páidín. Ar ndóigh d'aithneodh duine gan súil nach raibh aon doras ariamh ar an teach...
   '"I don't know what happened to the door... there was a door on the house yesterday," said Páidín. Now, a person without eyes could see that there had never been a door on the house...'

Acha, ní chuirfeadh sé sin iontas ar bith orm
   'Sure, that wouldn't surprise me at all.'

**Is mór an t-ionadh nach siar don Sruthán a chuaigh sibh.
   –Óra ní fhéadfá a dhul isteach don tSruthán gan aon bhlas le feiceáil istigh**
   'It's surprising that you didn't go west to Sruthán.
    –Oh, you couldn't go in to Sruthán with no visibility.'

27.3.2 Topic recovery

On occasion, *ar ndóigh* marks a return to the main narrative after a digression.

(Following a narrative of the day's proceedings, and before moving on to recount the events of the next day)
Ar ndóigh bhí go maith. Chuaigh Páidín agus a mháthair a chodladh, agus...
   'OK, fine. Páidín and his mother went to sleep and...'

A variety of other phrases can also mark the end of a digression, including *ar chuma ar bith*, *ar aon chuma*, *ar aon chaoi*, and a number of phonetic variants of *cibé ar bith* (*pé bith*, *fé brith é*, *hé bith*), all translatable as 'at any rate, in any case.'

(Returning to the story after verification of the listener's understanding):

Chuaigh sé ar an aonach, ar chuma ar bith…
  'He went to the fair, in any event…'

(A young penniless man is courting a woman's daughter. Digression to say that the woman disapproves):

Ach an lá seo, ar chuma ar bith, tháinig sé isteach, agus ní raibh istigh ach an tseanbhean
  'But on this day, anyway, he came in and only the old woman was there.'

(Marks a return to the main narrative after a digression):

Cibé ar bith scéal é, bhí an Nollaig agus an bhliain nua ag tarraingt orainn…
  'In any case, Christmas and the New Year were coming up…'

English *anyways* (almost always pronounced with the final *s*) is a very common borrowed form, which can also mark a return from a digression.

Ach, chuaigh muid go hÁrann, anyways, an oíche seo…
  'But, we went to Árann, anyway, this night…'

Or it may signal an end to a commentary on something previously uttered, opening the way for a return to the original topic or a new one.

Ní dhéanfaidh sé aon difear domsa, anyways
  'It makes no difference to me, anyway.'

27.3.3 Speech monitoring, clarification

Speakers often monitor their own speech and when they realize that they have been unclear, may self-correct or add an example or expansion to clarify. Clarifications are often introduced (sometimes followed) by *cuir i gcás* 'take, for instance.' Self-corrective clarification, when a listener has indicated misunderstanding, or the speaker has misspoken, is often followed by *tá mé ag rá* 'I am saying, I mean.'

Tá go leor fadhbanna ag muintir na hÉireann, easpa lóistín, cuir i gcás

    'The people of Ireland have many problems, a shortage of housing, for example.'

Cuir i gcás an rud a raibh muid ag caint air ansin roimh ré, saol feilméara i gConamara

    'Take, for instance, what we were talking about before, the life of the farmer in Connemara.'

…Rud eile, nuair a bhíodh teach ag dul ag déanamh bréidín an t-am sin, cuir i gcás go raibh mise ag dul ag déanamh bréidín…

    '…Another thing, when a household was going to make tweed at that time, suppose that I was going to make tweed…'

Beidh na Gaeilgeoirí ag teacht Dé Domhnaigh—lucht foghlamtha na Gaeilge, tá mé ag rá

    'The Gaeilgeoirí are coming Sunday—learners of Irish, I mean.'

27.3.4 Hedging

Certain phrases indicate that the speaker is less than perfectly committed to what was just said, or recognizes the possibility of an objection from the audience. Two common examples are *mar a dúirt an ceann eile* 'as the other one said,' and *mar a déarfá* 'as you would say,' both of which suggest the speaker is not responsible for the words just uttered. They are also used to introduce metaphors and formulaic sayings.

An-chainteoir é Máirtín, mar a déarfá, bíonn sé deas, soiléir

    'Máirtín is a terrific speaker, you might say, he's nice and clear.'

Ta airgead sa bhfeamainn. Ór, mar a déarfá

    'There's money in seaweed. Gold, so to speak.'

Mar a deir an ceann eile, tá an chaint gan aon chíos

    'As they say, talk is rent-free.'

The phrase *mar a déarfá* appears quite frequently after use of an English word or phrase in an otherwise all-Irish sentence, occasionally with explicit reference to English.

Tá an cnoc sin amuigh… ceithre mhíle*, as the crow flies*, mar a déarfá
  'That hill is out… four miles, as the crow flies, so to speak.'
'Sé an chaoi a rabhadar sin anois *for the purpose*, mar a déarfá
  'The fact is, they were there now, *for the purpose*, you might say.'
Dá dtógfá san *average* é, mar a deir an Béarla…
  'If you took it on average, as they say in English…'

27.3.5 Backchannelling

Backchannelling refers to ways in which a listener may respond to a narrative to indicate continued attention or engagement with the narrative. One very common use of *'sea*, the copular response meaning *yes*, is for this purpose. It can be inserted at short pauses in the narrative, not unlike English use of *yeah*, *m'hm*, and so on. Other phrases represent more explicit types of response. To verify that one has heard the speaker correctly, *An mar sin é?* or *An ea/ab ea?* 'Is that so?' can be used.

A reaction to a report of a surprising or dramatic event may evoke the response *stop!* This also often carries with it an indication of solidarity with the speaker on the part of the listener.

A: Mo chloigeann, bhí sé go dona   'My head, it hurt badly.'
B: Ó stop!

Not only a response, *stop* is sometimes included in the speaker's own narrative, in which case it serves as a kind of emphasis, to heighten the drama of the narrative.

Bhí an chraic ar an seandream, ó—stop!
  'The old gang sure had fun—oh, stop!

To indicate explicit agreement with what is being said listeners may say *is fíor duit* 'that's right' or, more emphatically, *d'fhéadfá a rá* 'you can say that again.' *'Sea* may also signal agreement rather than mere attention in some contexts, as may *cinnte* 'certainly,' the English borrowing *siúráilte* 'sure,' and *ar ndóigh* 'of course.'

Bhí sé an-dona freisin nach raibh?
  'He was very badly off too, wasn't he?'
  –Ar ndóigh, bhí.   'Yes, of course.'

Mild disagreement or uncertainty about what is being said might be indicated by *B'fhéidir* 'perhaps,' *Níl a fhios agam* 'I don't know,' or even more commonly *Meas tú?* 'I wonder' (lit. 'you think?'), signalling that the listener doesn't really believe what's being said, but doesn't want go get into a discussion of the matter just now. A Munster equivalent is *N'fheadar* 'I don't know.'

Kildalkey, nach ea a bheas an Bingo anocht?… Táim ag brath ar a dhul ann.
  –Á bhuel, níl a fhios agam. Tá sé an-fhada ó bhaile.
  '[In] Kildalkey, isn't it, that Bingo will be tonight? I'm thinking of going.'
  –'Ah well, I don't know. It's very far from home.'

Tá an oiread de ghealach ann… agus a thabharfadh sa gcuan muid.
  –Meas tú?
  'There's enough moonlight… to bring us into the bay.'
  –'You think so?'

Just as English speakers may insert *y'know* into a narrative, as a token check that the listener is following, so Irish speakers use *An bhfuil a fhios agat* 'Do you know?' or *An dtuigeann tú?* 'Do you understand?'

Ní bheadh a fhios é murach go raibh sé thíos ar an *logbook*, an bhfuil a fhios agat?
  'It wouldn't be known except that it was down in the logbook, you know?'
Tagann an tsúgáin isteach, an dtuigeann tú, i scéalta…
  'The súgáin [a straw rope] comes in, you understand, into stories…'

27.3.6 Affirmations

A wide range of words serves to highlight what is being said or has just been said, affirming the truth, value, or importance of the utterance. They may be used to indicate agreement or disagreement

with what another speaker has said (a form of backchannelling, as described in Section 27.3.5), but in other cases, they just serve to augment what the current speaker is saying. Markers with these functions include *ó, á, ara, m'anam,* or *mh'anam* '[upon] my soul,' *dar Fia* (euphemism for *dar Dia* 'by God'), *muise* 'indeed,' among others. The dictionary definitions given provide only the smallest hint of how the words are used in discourse contexts. English *by dad* is also very widespread. The choice of form varies by speaker and sometimes by region, but all are found with great frequency in conversational Irish. A few examples will suffice.

Ní fríothadh a chorp ariamh? –Á, ní fríothadh.
'His body was never found?' –'Oh, no.'
Ar inis mé cheana é? –M'anam nár inis.
Did I tell you before?' –'No, indeed.'
Agus, mh'anam nár áit mhaith é le fanacht rófhada.
'And, by my soul, it was not a good place to stay too long.'
***By dad,* bhí an ghaoth an-fhabharach amach.**
'By dad, the wind was very favorable out [on the sea].'

In addition to the response form signalling mild surprise illustrated in Section 27.1.7, *muis(e)* functions commonly as an affirmation marker. Like the other forms illustrated above, it may show agreement or disagreement with something previously said, or merely highlight the speaker's own commentary.

Ar airigh tú t'athair ag caint air? --D'airigh muis'.
'Did you hear your father talking about it?' 'I sure did.'
Bádóir a bhí ann? –Ní hea, muis' iascaire'.
Was he a boatman?' –'No, no, a fisherman.'
Ní dhéanfaidh me aon dearmad air sin go deo. Ní dhéanfaidh mé muise.
'I won't ever forget that. Indeed I won't.'
Ó muise, a mhac, is aisteach an saol é.
'Oh, well, son, it's a strange world.'

27.3.7 A multi-purpose borrowing

One of the most common of all discourse markers in contemporary Irish is *bhuel,* sometimes written *bhoil,* a borrowing of English *well.* It is used by all age groups, and serves many functions, overlapping with many of those described in the above sections of 27.3.

Topic shift:
Bhuel, fágfaidh mé an tseanbhean i mo dhiaidh go n-inseoidh me faoi *Chasadh an tsúgáin* duit.
Well, I'll leave the old woman aside to tell you about *Casadh an tsúgáin.*'

Perspective shift:
Bhoil, now, má bhrisim anois í, tá mé réídh.
'Well, now, if I break it now, I'm finished.'

(Listener expresses opinion on a discussion from the previous night)

Bhuel bhí sé sin ceart go leor. Ach níor fhan mé istigh ag éisteacht leis an gcomhrá.
'Well that's all right. But I didn't stay to hear the discussion.'

Topic recovery:

(Following description of a speech by Danny and a digression to check whether listener heard the speech)
Bhuel, bhí Danny go maith, ceart go leor.
'Well, Danny was good, all right.'

Turn-taking:

Bhuel, inseoidh mé scéal duit anois…
'Well, I'll tell you a story now…'

Ending a turn/leave-taking:

Bhuel, lá maith anois agat. 'Well, have a nice day, now.'

Response:

An bhfuil mé in ann aon chúnamh a thabhairt duit?
–Bhoil, inseoidh mé mo scéal duit agus b'fhéidir go mbeifeá.
'Can I give you any help?'
–'Well, I'll tell you my story, and maybe you can.'

Hedging:

Ta aithne agat air, an bhfuil?
 –Bhuel, chonaic mé é ach ní…
 'You know him, don't you?'
 –'Well, I've seen him, but not… [wouldn't say I know him].'

Affirmation:

Bhoil, shílfeá, a deirimse, go mbeadh siad buailte againn.
 'Well, you'd think, I'm telling you, that we'd have beaten them.'
**Bhuel, anois, a deir an Rí, is tú an t-aon fhear sa domhan a bhí
in ann an éacht sin a dhéanamh.**
 'Well, now, said the King, you are the only man in the world who
was able to accomplish that feat.'

27.3.8 Multiple markers

It is by no means uncommon for speakers to double up on discourse
markers, using several, especially as affirmations, to increase the
salience of the utterance.

Ó m'anam, muise, gurb í an fhírinne í.
 'Oh, on my soul, indeed, that's the truth.'
Ah mhuise a mhac, ar ndóigh, is gearr é.
 'Ah, indeed, son, sure it won't be long.'
Ó, muise, mh'anam, sin é an fear a bhí láidir.
 'Oh, indeed, on my soul, that was some strong man.'
Ara, muis', cá bhfuil siad?
 'Indeed, where are they?'
Á, muise, mh'anam gurb ea.
 'Ah, indeed, it sure is.'
Ó muise, ar ndóigh, cuimhním, a stór!
 'Oh, indeed, sure I remember, my dear!'

English translations given above are for illustrative purposes, but in
many cases, the sense of augmentation these markers provide in Irish
is more likely to be left untranslated, or conveyed by intonation and
facial expression, rather than by words.

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